
A
Spiritual Retreat
FOR
ONE DAY
In Every
MONTH.



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By a Priest of the Society of Jesus.

Translated out of French.

Printed in the Year 1710.



T H E

P R E F A C E.

THE Design of Publishing this Book is to furnish all Sorts of *Christians* with an easy Method of Retreat; especially such whose Business will not afford them Leisure for an Annual Retreat of eight or ten Days together.

It is hoped that the Facility of making these Retreats will render them more usual; and therefore for the Help of those who (being wholly Strangers to these Pious Exercises) stand in need of more particular Directions, you will find some Chapters in the Beginning of the Book, and before the Meditations, of the Necessity of Retreat, and of the Methods of doing it well.

The Preface.

The Body and Principal Part of the Book consists of Meditations on the Great Truths of our Holy Religion; in which I have endeavour'd to chuse the most proper Subjects, and to put them in such an Order, and treat them so at large, as may render them most capable of making a due Impression on those who attentively and seriously consider them. And because our Design in these Retreats ought to be to prepare our selves, by a true Change of Life, for a happy Death, I have repeated the Meditation of Death every Month, and added a new Exercise of Preparation for it; which may be very useful if we put it in Practice with such Dispositions as it requires: And to render it more easy, I have been very particular in specifying the Sentiments we ought to entertain, and in inserting the most suitable Prayers to inspire those Sentiments.

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The Preface.

The Last Part contains *Christian Reflections* upon different Subjects, to supply the Place of those Considerations which are propos'd in other Books of Spiritual Retreat, for Private Reading and Entertainment. In the Number and Variety of which Reflections every Reader will find something profitable, according to his State and Disposition.



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NOS Infrascripti Sacræ Facultatis
Parisiensis Doctores Theologi, testamur nihil esse in hac Traductione Libri, cui Titulus, *Retraite Spirituelle pour un Jour chaque Mois*, aut Fidei aut Pietati dissonum. Datum *Parisiis*, Die 22 Julij, 1700.

Joannes Ingleton

Thomas Witham

Fidem facio Testimonium hoc cui subscripserant Magistri *Joannes Ingleton* & *Thomas Witham*, ejus esse Auctoritatis, ut ei facile credatur & secure ambo sunt *Angli*, in Facultate *Parisiensi* Doctores, Pij & Eruditi, quorum Chirographum hic appositum probe novum.
Die *Augusti* prima, 1700.

Pirot.



A

Spiritual Retreat

F O R

One Day in the Month.

C H A P. I.

Of Spiritual Retreat.

OF all Pious Exercises there is none more proper to convert a Soul than a *Spiritual Retreat*: And it is perhaps the only one that is never unprofitable. When every thing contributes either to pervert or distract us, it is not at all strange that the most awakening Doctrines of our Religion make but a light Impression: But when we retire ourselves from the Noise and Disturbance of the World, when we set our selves to meditate at leisure on those great Truths which we

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had never seriously enough considered, and which appear to us then in another manner, when our Application enables us to penetrate the true Sense of them, and every thing helps to discover all their Consequences, it is almost impossible for us not to be affected with them; Especially since this is a Time wherein Grace flows more abundantly, and wherein our Hearts are best dispos'd to receive it.

The Experience of the miraculous Conversion of so many Hardned Sinners, of the Establishment and Reformation of so many Religious Houses, of so many Lukewarm Christians, Recovered from their Tepidity, and become, in a few Days, Fervent Servants of God, is a sensible Demonstration of the Benefit we may Reap, by considering in Order, and in Solitude, the great Truths of the Gospel.

S. Xaverius, S. Charles Borromeus, S. Francis de Sales, and almost all the Saints of these latter Ages, have acknowledg'd that they owe their Conversion, and their Progress in Holiness, to these Spiritual Exercises. And 'tis in Imitation of these Examples that they who apply themselves seriously to work out their Salvation, and all well-regulated Communities, put themselves under an indispensable Obligation to Consecrate Yearly, at least Eight or Ten Days, to the same Exercises.

Let us not flatter ourselves, 'tis very hard to keep our Affections pure in the midst of



a World where every thing conspires to defile them; we shall find it very difficult to live long among so much Corruption, and not be some way tainted with it. Time slackens the greatest Fervor, and the most Heroick Virtue stands in need of frequent Supplies of Strength. To which End it is absolutely necessary to retire our selves from time to time; and if we would breath a purer Air, we must seek it in Solitude.

As too much worldly Conversation always distracts, abates our Fervour, and makes all our Virtues languishing and weak: So it is only by Recollection and Retreat that we can recover our selves, and regain new Fervour.

The Holy Ghost did not visibly descend till the Apostles separated themselves from the Multitude, and went into the Desert: And S. Bernard declares, *That he could never hear the Voice of God while he was taken up with Worldly Business; but as soon as he came to himself, he retir'd into Solitude, to converse at Leasure with his Divine Master, and to say with Confidence, Speak now my God, for thy Servant heareth; speak, for I am ready to obey thy Will.* S. Bern. de Inter. Dom. Cap. 66.

Can any Man reasonably refuse to practice what is so much for his Advantage? And what he stands so much in need of? Yet many who are convinc'd of the Necessity of Retreat, pretend that they have not Time for it; and this is the common Excuse of

those who neglect it. But, good God! will this Excuse be received? Our Business takes up all our Time; is not the Care of our Salvation a Business? Can any thing in the World be of so great Importance to us, or concern us so nearly? Alas! we have indeed no other Business but this; we were sent into the World only for this end; God has judg'd our whole Lives little enough for this great Work, and can we pretend that we are not able to spare Eight or Ten Days in a Year for it.

A Fit of Sickness makes us quit all our Business to look after our Health; we think our selves bound to lay aside all Affairs for whole Months together, rather than neglect a Suit at Law, or hazard the Loss of an Estate, or Expose a Friend or Relation to Ruin, who depends wholly upon our Care and Diligence. Are we not as much concern'd to recover out of a State of Sin, as to be cur'd of a Distemper? Is not Heaven worth more than an Estate? And what greater Misery can we fall into, than to be visibly in Danger of Damnation?

But we hope to make use of the first Leisure our Business will allow us to think of our Salvation; alas! If we don't resolve to find Leisure for it, our Business will never allow us any: Let us not be so indifferent for Salvation; let us but look upon this as a real Business, and we shall very easily find Eight or Ten Days to employ in this great and weighty Affair of Eternity.

'Tis very surprizing that the most innocent Souls, who have the least Need of Retreat, never think themselves safe without it: The most Apostolical Men, who live in the World only to sanctifie it, are yet in continual Fear of being corrupted by it: Those Holy Souls, who never lose the Presence of God, are yet sensible of Distractions, even in the most fervent Exercises of their Zeal: The most heroick Christians interrupt their Labours from time to time, to recollect themselves in Solitude, and think it the only Preservative against the Corruptions of the World, and the most certainest Means to obtain new Strength.

Even the most exact Religious, whose whole Life is a continual Retreat, do not find themselves enough retired: And yet Men of a very slender Virtue, in Comparison of them, who are every Moment expos'd to the greatest Dangers, who live in a constant Dissipation of Mind, in the midst of a World which they themselves own to be extreemly wicked, and in which they confess it is very hard to be saved. Can such Men as these imagine that a Retreat of Eight or Ten Days is not fit for them? Can they deceive themselves with the false Excuse of Want of Time, when they are even weary of Idleness, when they don't know how to employ themselves, when the greatest Part of their Lives is spent in vain Amusements and Diversions? Can such want Time?

Time? Certainly, if they would confess the Truth, they must own that they want not Time, but Will.

Our Saviour's Parable of the Highway, where the Seed of the Word of God is trodden down, and carried away by the Birds of the Air, is a just Description of these busie Men, always taken up with the Affairs of the World. Now since we cannot be saved, if we do not make a right Use of the Grace of God, since this Heavenly Seed cannot spring up in an Heart expos'd to Noise and Tumult, it is evident that we are under a kind of Necessity, either to retire our selves sometimes from the World, or to renounce all Hopes of being saved.

But some object, What will People say if they see me go into a Retreat, to think only on Eternity? How shall I be ridicul'd and laugh'd at? Good God! How long shall such idle Apprehensions stifle the most noble Sentiments, make Men reject the Grace of God, and abandon their best Resolutions: What can they say? That you have really a Desire to be saved, and that you take the best Method for it: All wise Men will esteem you, many will imitate you, none but Libertines will blame such a truly Christian Conduct; the Railleries of such are real Praises, and you ought not at all to be concerned what they say or think.

Men

Men are not ashamed to pass whole Days at Play, and in Vanity, of which they will certainly repent one Day, if they have not done it already; and can they be afraid to spend eight Days in the Compass of every Year in preparing for another Life, in securing their Salvation?

C H A P. II.

Of the great Importance of making One Day's Retreat every Month.

TIS not very hard to make Men sensible that a Spiritual Retreat is an excellent Means to amend our Lives, and work out our Salvation; but the Difficulty lyes in perswading them that they may find Time for it if they will: Eight Days seem very long to them, and indeed there are many who cannot spare so much Time together.

Multitude of Business, the Care of a Family, Want of Health, the necessary Duties of their Callings, are the Reasons or Pretences whereby some excuse themselves from making a Retreat of Eight Days; but no Man can pretend that he is not able to allow One Day in a Month to that Holy Exercise. Is any thing more reasonable than this? He may chuse what Day he pleases, which renders it as easie as it is useful.

You are desir'd to spend One Day in a Month, to take Care of what concerns you more than all Things in the World, to apply your selves to the great Business of your Life, upon which Eternity depends; that when you have spent a whole Month in what you call Business, and which is rather the Business of others than your own, you would give One Day to the only Business that regards your self: That after having labour'd for the World, you would labour One Day for everlasting Happiness.

Would any Man refuse One Day in a Month to serve his Friend? Alas! How many do Men lose every Month in vain Pleasure, in Play, in trifling Folly? You are desir'd to spend but One for your Soul; you must surely be very indifferent for Salvation, and very careless of what becomes of you hereafter, if you refuse it: Especially since the following Chapters will render this Practice so very easie, that it seems impossible for any one reasonably to decline it.

How industrious are Merchants to improve every Opportunity of acquiring Riches? How exact are they in stating their Accompts from time to time, and observing how they thrive, what they have gain'd or lost? Thus let us take One Day at least to examine carefully the State of our Consciences, and what Progress we make in Virtue.

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The great Benefit of this Christian Practice is visible; all Sorts of Men may find Good by it; 'tis very efficacious to reclaim Sinners from their Disorders, and make them return to God, to confirm the Virtuous, and to elevate them to the highest degree of Christian Perfection.

Besides the Usefulness of meditating on the most important Truths of Religion, it is almost impossible that a Man who sets aside his most serious Business, and retires from the World, to employ one Day every Month in the serious Consideration of the State of his Soul, should not succeed. God, who seeks us with so much Patience when we fly from him, and who is not weary of offering us Mercy, notwithstanding our Refusals, but calls on us, even when our Ear-nessness after the World makes us deaf to his Call, will never hide himself from those who come so often to meet him in the midst of Solitude: He will never refuse to communicate himself abundantly to those who withdraw themselves from all Things to hearken to him.

Neither our Condition nor our Employments require this of us, nor do we do it out of Custom or Ostentation, which is so inseparable from other Acts of Piety; none of all these lead us to Retreat; nothing but a sincere Desire to work out our Salvation can bring us there; and can a sincere Desire be ineffectual? Can it be attended with

small Profit? 'Tis hardly possible that a Man, who sets apart one Day in a Month to study the Methods of living well, should live disorderly: Nor is he in Danger of being surpriz'd by Death, who so frequently, and so exactly, prepares for it.

But the Importance of this Retreat will appear much greater, if we consider the Necessity we lye under to reflect often on the great Verities of our Faith. 'Tis from the Want of this Reflection that we see so few Christians live up to the Purity of their Profession. We see but few truly Virtuous, tho' they are oblig'd to be so in a very high Degree, because Men seldom reflect on the Divine Truths; they content themselves with submitting their Reason to Faith, they think it enough to believe: But tho' we do not find many Infidels in the Church, yet I am afraid we find fewer Christians, who seriously consider what they believe, and this is the Reason that what we believe of the End of our Creation, of the small Number of the Elect, of the Pains of Hell, and of Everlasting Misery, make so slight an Impression on us. This want of Reflection has always been, and still is, the usual Cause of our Sins, of our return to them after we have resolv'd to quit them, and of our *advancing no more in Piety.*

For as without reflecting on what we read, we shall learn but little by our reading, so we shall make small Progress in Virtue, if

we do not frequently reflect on what we believe. 'Tis generally from serious Reflections that great Conversions *spring*, and without it the most terrible Doctrines of Christianity, the most amazing Accidents, and the most sensible Graces, will have no great Effect on us.

Can a Man, who attentively considers the Vanity of the World, and all its Allurements, who reflects seriously on what he believes of Hell, Judgment, and Eternity, who is affected with its Rigours, and who foresees its Consequences; can such a Man refuse to yield himself to the Divine Grace, which always makes use of those happy Moments? 'Tis these Reflections that have peopled the Desarts, that fill our Convents every Day, and that recal so many Sinners from their evil Ways. If we could once persuade Men to reflect often, we should find their Lives reform'd, we should see the ancient Fervour of Religious Houses renewed; this would be a sure Way to prevent the greatest Disorders, and to make Saints.

This is what you are to do in your Retreat; spend the Day in reflecting seriously on the great Truths of our Religion, in examining your Life, and meditating on the Points of your Faith. 'Tis properly a Day of Reflection, which you may easily see must needs be useful, and that it concerns you very much to do it well. The Eight Days Retreat is for the same end. But besides,

that the length of time is a false Pretence to several for performing it very carelessly, this must be more profitable, because that is usually made but once a Year, this every Month.

This is no new Devotion, but the Practice of the greatest Saints of latter Ages: 'Tis to this Divine Art that Saint *Ignatius*, Founder of the Society of Jesus, confesses he ow'd his Progress in Virtue, and therefore he was so careful to recommend it to his Children. By these Retreats *S. Stanislaus*, a Novice of the same Society, preserv'd his Innocence, and acquir'd that tender Devotion, and that admirable Piety, in a little time, which he practic'd in an ordinary Way of Life. 'Tis by the same Retreats that Blessed *Lewis Gonzaga*, more illustrious by his Sanctity than by his Birth, arriv'd to that sublime Perfection, for which we admire him. And 'tis without doubt from these Examples that we see it so frequently practis'd by those truly Pious Souls, who desire to advance towards Perfection.

But the first and great Example of those frequent and short Retreats is Christ himself, who often withdrew from the Multitude that followed him, and even from his own Disciples, to some Mountain or Desert; and the Benefit which is daily receiv'd by this Practice, is an evident Proof that it is pleasing to him.

We need not seek this Solitude out of our own Houses; we need not neglect our Business, or omit any of the Duties of our Calling; how many *Sundays* and Holidays are there in every Month? We may chuse one of these, and that in which we shall have most leisure: All that is desir'd of you, is to retrench a Visit or two, to deny yourselves some Hours of Diversion, and such frivolous Occupations, that you may the better take Care of your Salvation. And can you be so much your own Enemy as to think Eternal Happiness does not deserve One Day in Thirty?

You must certainly think Heaven worth very little, if it be not worth your trying so efficacious, and so easie, a Method to obtain it. In reality, tho' it cost you never so much, you cannot buy the Blessing of a good Conscience too dear: That inward Peace which surpasses Imagination, that sweet Confidence In the Mercy of God, and all those innumerable Advantages, which are the constant Fruits of this Care of your Salvation, can never be bought dear; is one Day too much for this great Work? Can one ask less? 'Tis astonishing that we must be forc'd to use Arguments to persuade Men to allow One Day to make themselves happy.

We must expect that the Devil, who is the declar'd Enemy of our Souls, and who knows how many have been deliver'd from his

his Power by these Retreats, will certainly employ all his Devices to hinder us from making them; to this end he will not fail to throw *Rubs* in our Way, he will represent a Hundred little Difficulties to our Imaginations, capable to dishearten an irresolute Soul; sometimes we shall imagine our selves indisposed, sometimes out of Humour; he will suggest to us a Thousand false Reasons to perswade us to put it off till another time, that he may bring us under a kind of Necessity of not doing it at all; for when he has once gain'd upon us to defer it, we shall meet with a Multitude of trivial Affairs, which shall seem pressing, till by putting it off from Time to Time, we come at last to neglect it wholly. Let us then oppose a generous and fix'd Resolution and Good will to the Artifices of the Tempter, and all these seeming Difficulties will soon vanish.

This useful and necessary Devotion is proper for all Sorts of Christians of what State or Condition soever: 'Tis equally beneficial to Religious and Seculars; they who are not yet converted, they who begin to seek Perfection, and they who are already advanced in the Way, will all find Profit by it. Especially the lukewarm, careless Souls can never find a surer Remedy; their Condition is already very dangerous; and if this does not cure them, it is much to be feared that they are past Hopes.

Church-men and Religious are oblig'd by their Vocation to a greater Perfection than other Christians; this Practice is an excellent Means to obtain it, and there is no Sort of Men who can with so much Ease set apart One Day in a Month for it.

If after all this there be found among those who are consecrated to God any lazy Soul, who under Pretence of want of Leisure, cannot, or will not, find Time for this Holy Exercise, he will do well to consider what *S. Augustin* writes to his Bishop *Valerius* on the same Subject; *What Answer shall I give to God? (saith that great Saint) Shall I tell him that a Multitude of Ecclesiastical Affairs took up all my Time, so that I could have no Leisure for Retreat to seek Perfection? But if he reply, O wicked Servant! You would have found Leisure enough to absent your self, to go to Law with any one that invaded your Rights, or that offer'd to deprive your Church of Part of that Revenue which is only useful for the Relief of the Poor, but you could not find Time to retire for your own Sanctification, though you knew how necessary it was to enable you to assist the Poor, and convert all Sorts of People. What shall I answer to this Reproach? Aug. Epist. 148. ad Valerian, So what shall we answer to the Question that will be put to us One Day, if we be now so indifferent for Salvation as not to find Eight or Ten Days for serious Meditation? But, my God! What shall we answer if we refuse to spend only One Day in a Month in Retreat?*

The

The Pretence of Business being inseparable from every Day; will not hold here; some Days indeed you may be oblig'd to follow it, you are therefore at liberty to chuse what Day you will: But if you object that it takes up every Moment of our Time, I must then give you the same Counsel which S. Eucherius gives to Valerian. *Break that endless Chain of Business; the Business of your Salvation is the first and greatest Business you can have, give henceforth your first and chiefest Care; let it be not only your principal Business; during your Retreat, but your only Business, which requires all your Application.* S. Eucher. Epis. Lugd. in Epis. ad Valerian.

C H A P. III.

Of the Dispositions in which we must be to make the Retreat with Profit.

THE Benefit of all Pious Exercises depends very much on our Motives, on the Dispositions of our Souls, and on the Means of performing them. We can have no ill Motive in so Holy a Practice, nothing but a sincere Desire to amend our Lives, and increase in Virtue, can lead us to retreat? It is not likely we should have other Motives

Self

Self-love and Pride cannot please themselves here, because there is no Noise or Ostentation: Let us now take a View of the Dispositions and Method whereby we may receive most Profit. A Sense of our Want of it, and a Persuasion that this Practice may be very useful to us, is one good Disposition.

The rest which we ought to have, if we would receive Benefit, are almost the same which the Author of the *Retreat*, according to the Spirit and Method of S. Ignatius, sets down in his *Preface*, and are chiefly Five.

The *First* is an unfeigned Desire to think seriously of our Salvation; a firm Resolution not to flatter our selves, but to examine carefully and exactly, without disguising any thing, the State of our Souls, what Progress we make in the way of Perfection, what Benefit we receive by the Sacraments, what Ground we gain, whether we be Victorious over our selves, and whether we be in such a State as we would venture to appear before God, to give an Account of our Lives. In fine, whether we be such now as we would desire to be at the Hour of Death.

But all our Examinations and Discoveries will be to no Purpose, unless we add to them a firm Resolution to correct whatever amiss: This is not one of those barren Devotions, which for the most part serve only to amuse the imperfect, and render them more

more faulty; they who have not a real Design, and an earnest Desire to walk with God, will find but little Satisfaction in it: their Coldness and Indifference will soon make them weary.

The *Second Disposition* is an humble Distrust of our selves, supported by a firm Confidence in God, knowing that Salvation is chiefly his Work, and that without him we can do nothing; assuring our selves, that since he hath inspir'd us with the Desire of retiring once a Month, he will not refuse us the necessary Graces to profit by it. And indeed this Desire of making use of the best Means to convert our selves to God, is an evident Proot that he who inspires it, would fain have us return, and be converted; and we find, by Experience, that those unhappy Men, who die in their Sins, are such as made but very little use of this excellent Means of *Conversion*.

The *Third Disposition* is a free Heart, that gives its self to God without Reserve, saying with St. Paul, Act. 9. 6. Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do! Or, with David, Psal. 56. 8. My Heart is ready, O God, my Heart is ready to do thy Will. The want of this Disposition is the Cause that the most pious Practices are without Effect.

For when we think of an entire Conversion, we are too often irresolute; we will and will not; we know not what we would have; and very often we imagine

De- that we desire what we really and indeed
with not desire. We are for capitulating
it with our Maker, we are for retaining
oom one Part of what we promise him, we
deliberate on every thing he requires, we
Dispute with him on every Occasion. My
Con- God! What is it we fear to throw our
on selves entirely on thee? We are convinc'd
a we that 'tis the best thing we can do, but
that we are unwilling to do it, because we
desire foresee that if we once give our selves to
refuse thee, we shall soon grow weary of the
And Creatures; the Communications of thy self
best to us will not fail to render us sensible of
is an their Vanity, and make us loath them,
s it and we are unwilling to be made sensible
con of it, or to loath them; this is what we
that fear.

Sins- The *Fourth Disposition* is a punctual Ob-
f this servance of the Order and Rule of our
Retreat; an Exactness in every Part of it,
that neglecting nothing that can contribute to
, say or doing it well, judging nothing little
what is capable of advancing so great a
David Work as our Salvation, being fully per-
d, m- vaded of this Truth, that the great Pro-
want of this Devotion depends on Exactness
t the least things. Whether it be that
ft. this Carefulness is an evident Proof of our
inver- sincerity, or that it prevails with God to
e will refuse none of his Graces to those who
at we neglect nothing to please him.

imagine- The *Fifth Disposition*, which is, as it were
that the Soul of all Spiritual Retreats, is a perfect
Solitude

Solitude both inward and outward, keeping our selves in a profound Recollection and Silence, and avoiding every thing that can any way distract us.

When an indolent Soul is eight or ten Days in Retreat, the Devil easily finds some Occasion to disgust it with its Holy Employment; it thinks the time long — when it has none but God to converse with. When it finds not many Spiritual Comforts in Prayer, when its Thoughts are almost continually distracted; its Want of Fervour, and the Imperfection of its Desires to be converted, render the most Holy Exercises of Devotion very unpleasant; Eight Days in Retreat seem an Age, so that it counts all the Hours, and wishes for the last. But to these Dangers we are not exposed in One Day's Retreat; tis but One Day, and if we make a right use of it, we may gain as much, and perhaps more, Profit than in a longer Retreat, which ought certainly to engage us to neglect nothing whereby we may improve such a precious Season to the best Advantage.

One Day in thirty is but a small Matter; let us give it heartily and cheerfully to God; let us be very exact in the Performance of the Spiritual Exercises, that we may have nothing to reproach ourselves. One Day is quickly over, and it will be our unspeakable Comfort to have past it well.

C H A P. IV.

How we are to spend the Day of Retreat.

IT being left to every one's Convenience to chuse what Day he pleases for this Retreat; we should pitch upon the Day wherein we may have the least Interruption, and which we can best have to our selves. If it be possible we should communicate the same Day: Men of Business and Tradesmen would do well to chuse a Holyday, and Religious Men some Day, wherein they can, without Distraction, give themselves intirely to this Holy Exercise.

We should endeavour to spend half an Hour in Meditation the Night before, to dispose us for the Duties of the Day, at least; we should read attentively the Preparatory Meditation, compos'd for that End; and if we have Opportunity, we should at the same Time, and with the same Design, visit our Redeemer in the Blessed Sacrament.

We must observe a profound Silence during the whole Day, to which we must add an inward Recollection: We must spend it in exact Solitude, as far as our Condition will permit; but we are not hereby oblig'd to neglect any of the Duties of our Calling, nor are Religious Persons forbid their ordinary Recreations, and much less the Duties of

of their Vocation. We must make the Day the three Meditations design'd for each Month, and pass an Hour in reflecting on the Practical Truths of Religion; our *Confession* should be larger and more particular than ordinary, that we may thereby endeavour to repair the Faults of former *Confessions*, and chiefly to excite a true Contrition in our Hearts, wherein all sorts of People, and even the best Christians are too often faulty.

We must hear *Mass*, and receive as if it were to be our last *Communion*, and perform all the other Exercises in the same Disposition. Priests should examine themselves particularly whether their Lives are suitable to the Holiness of their Character, whether they celebrate with such Affection as become Men, who are really penetrated with what they profess to believe. Let them offer that adorable Sacrifice with such a fervent Devotion, that the Day's *Mass* may be an Atonement for the Faults they have been guilty of in all the rest, and be a Model of those they shall say for the future: Making it their great Business to profit by this more than they have yet done.

We must be very careful to keep our selves retir'd, and to avoid every thing that can possibly distract us: There is no Danger of thinking the Time long; we shall find Employment for every Moment; and One Day employ'd is soon pass'd over; it is but a Day

Let us make it indeed a Day of Retreat; all the Time we are not in the Church, we should keep our selves shut up in our Chamber; and indeed it would be well to do most of our Spiritual Exercises in the Chamber; unless we have Conveniences of being as much retir'd before the *Blessed Sacrament*.

Because this Exercise is very useful to all Sorts of Men, and the greatest Part cannot meditate, I have calculated these Meditations for the greater Number; to that End I have made them long, that they may find Matter enough to take them up for an Hour together: That the very Reading of them may be truly a Meditation, and that they may be profitable.

Such as can meditate may make use of what Part of them they find most for their purpose; but these, as well as the others, must be very careful to avoid a Fault, to which most who meditate on the Truths of our Religion are too subject; they must not content themselves with believing them, and think their Work done when they are once convinced; it is not enough to believe those important Truths; the Devils believe much, perhaps more than we, and tremble. We must not stop at Speculation, we must reduce them to Practice. Our Meditations must all tend to reform us. It is not sufficient to read and believe the Truth of what we read; we must attentively consider every Point. and apply it to our selves; we must examine its Consequences,

quences, and make those Reflections them, as we would do if we were on a Death-Bed, when we know we shall have little or no Time left to profit by them.

Let this be your Way of Meditation if you read; do it with Attention; pass upon each Passage that affects you, and put the Question to your self, Is this true? Have I liv'd up to these Rules? What do they require of me for the future? And then reflect seriously on the distant Consequences attending your Negligence, if this double Discovery do not produce more Fruit than your former Meditation have yet done.

You need not trouble your self to read the whole Meditation; if one single Reflection take up all the Hour, provided you receive Good by it, you have spent that Hour well; and the rest of the Meditation may serve you to read some other time of the Day, which is not absolutely allotted to some particular Exercise.

A right Consideration is very useful, and therefore to be carefully perform'd: It consists in reading with Application the Reflections at the End of the Book; you may pass slightly over those which are less suitable to you, and dwell longer on such Heads as you find affect you most, and which are most proper for you.

Besides the Hour usually spent after Dinner in Consideration, it would be well to allot half an Hour in the Morning for Re-

Religious Men to reflect on the Observation of their Rules, and others on the Duties of their particular Callings; observing exactly wherein they have fail'd, and prescribing to themselves such Methods as may be most efficacious for their Amendment: If we cannot spare half an Hour, we must divide the Hour of Consideration; one half for general Reflections, and the other half for those that concern our particular Rules, and the Duties of our Callings.

And here we are always to remember, that we must not content our selves in these Spiritual Exercises to form good Designs, and take strong Resolutions of changing our Lives; it is to no Purpose to resolve, tho' we seem to do it never so sincerely, unless we likewise fix the particular Means and Methods by which we may effectually practice what we have resolv'd.

It is not our Business to read much; let us read less, and profit more; we should chuse to read only what is useful to us. 'Tis not sufficient to be able to say that we have read some Spiritual Discourse; we must read with a Design to grow better by what we read.

We have already observ'd, that Religious Persons are not hereby dispens'd from the Exercises of their Communities, nor even from their usual Recreations; but having discover'd by their Examinations the Faults they are subject to in those Exercises and

Recreations, they should begin that very Day to reap the Benefit of their Retreat, by beginning to correct themselves, and reform those Faults; carrying themselves in every Occasion as *Men* who are already chang'd; and being careful, now more than ever, to lift up their Hearts fervently to God, and beg him to preserve them from that Distraction and Dissipation of Mind which generally accompany Conversation.

The great Design of this Spiritual Retreat being to prepare us for Death, I have compos'd a third Meditation on the Sentiments we shall have in that last Hour, to be read in every Retreat: And it being the most proper Subject for the End I propos'd to myself, I judg'd the same Meditation might be renew'd every Month.

The chief Benefit we are to receive by this Pious Exercise being a Reformation of all the Faults we have discover'd in our selves since the last Retreat, a more earnest longing for Perfection, the getting the Victory over our favourite Passion, a more ardent Love to our Redeemer, particularly in the adorable Sacrament, and a greater Exactness in all our Duties; we are at the beginning of each Retreat to propose these Things to our selves as the End for which we make it. And seeing it is a direct Preparation for Death, we are to come out of it in such a State, as we would desire to be in if we were immediately to die:

And

And we must be careful to keep our selves in the same Disposition.

General Resolutions are commonly useless, and to no purpose; our best Way is to pitch upon some particular Fault, which may be the Subject of our daily Examination, and to regulate the Means which we will every Day employ to reform it, till the next Retreat.

And the better to preserve those good Dispositions, we should first render Thanks to God for the Graces he has bestow'd on us during the Retreat. We should then offer up all our Resolutions to him, and renew them with more Earnestness; beseeching the Blessed Virgin to intercede for us with her Son, that he would give us his Grace, whereby we may be render'd faithful to the End; and begging that she would undertake for our Fidelity, which she can obtain for us.

But after all these Resolutions, we must not rely so much upon them as to forget our Weakness; for nothing is more dangerous than too much Security.

It very much concerns us to be exact in our Watch the first Three or Four Days; after this we shall find the Difficulties lessen, so that we shall execute our Resolutions with Ease; the greatest Difficulties are in the beginning, and the surest Way to maintain our Fervour, is without any Delay to declare our selves for Virtue.

A Meditation to prepare for Retreat.

THE Subject of this Meditation is taken out of the Parable in *Luk. 13. 6, 7. &c.* *Of the Man who sought Fruit on a Fig-tree, planted in his Vineyard; and finding none, said to the Dresser of the Vineyard, It is now Three Years that I come seeking Fruit on this Fig-tree, and find none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground? But his Servant desir'd him to wait One Year more, that he might dig about it, and dung it; and if after all his Care it should be still unfruitful, then he would cut it down.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider with what Care God hath hitherto cultivated us, that we might bring forth Fruit. We came into the World not only a barren Tree, but corrupted and spoil'd by Original Sin, fit for nothing but to be cast into Hell Fire. The singular Mercy of God has preferr'd us to many others, has planted us in his Church, by making us Christians, or in the fertile Field of a Religious Life, if by a greater Effect of his Love he has call'd us to that State.

Have we ever truly known the Advantage of being planted in this Holy Ground, cultivated by the Labours, and water'd by the Sweat and Blood, of him who is both
God

God and Man? This Ground in which we are hath produc'd those Heroes of Christianity, and bears every Day a Multitude of Saints of all Sexes, Ages and Conditions. Those excellent Souls, with the same maturing, that is, with the same Assistance that is given us, have and do every Day bring forth Fruit worthy of Eternal Life. They had no other Gospel, no other Sacraments, than we have; the Grace of God abounds at all Times; their Rules were not different from ours, only they were more faithful to those Rules, by the exact Observation of which alone, they are become great Saints. We have the Benefit of their Examples, and many proper Helps which they wanted.

Add to these Advantages the particular Favours we have receiv'd from God; call to Mind all the Pains he hath taken to make us fruitful; all the good Thoughts he hath inspir'd us with; all the Pious Resolutions he hath excited in us since we had the Use of Reason; his Favours have been innumerable since we have been in his Service: How often hath he nourish'd us with the Food of Angels, his own Flesh? How often have we heard him speaking to our Hearts? How often has he enlightned us? How many Graces have we receiv'd from him in our Retreats and Communions? And how many other Favours hath he heap'd on us.

Half these are sufficient to make a great Saint; nay, there are many blessed Spirits now in Heaven who never had all these Advantages, and yet they bare much Fruit: They made admirable Use of their Talents; their Lives were full of good Works, which have adorn'd them with Merits, whereby they now possess everlasting Happiness, a just Reward of their Fidelity. Let us now consider seriously and impartially, whether the same manuring, and the sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ, have made us, like them bear much Fruit.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that the Fruits God requires of us are not dry and barren Devotions and Appearances of Virtue, which serve for the most part only to amuse the Imperfect, who with all their pretended good Works pass their whole Lives in Sloth and Tepidity, without growing better in any one Point. Their specious Virtues are but Leaves, but gaudy Outsides, which deceive Men and themselves too, making them take the Effects of Passion, or Humane Respect, of Education, or of their natural Temper, for real Virtues.

The Fruits which *S. John* calls *Fruits worthy of Penance*, Mat. 3. 8. and *S. Paul* the *Fruits of the Spirit*, Gal. 5. 22, 23. &c. are the Effects of a true Love to God, and a perfect Charity towards our Neighbour: They are such

as a solid Piety produces, an extream Horror for the smallest Sin, a violent Hunger after Righteousness, an universal, constant and continual Mortification, a profound Humility, a great Exactness in all the Duties of our Calling; they are an exceeding Aversion for every thing our Saviour hates, and a high Esteem for every thing he loves: The Victory over our Passions, the Reformation of our Lives and Conduct; are the Fruits that he expects from us. This is the Meaning of those Words, *Bring forth Fruits worthy of Penance*, Matth. 3. 8. shew by your Works, and by the whole Course of your Life, that you are really converted.

Here let us examine our selves; have we brought forth many of these Fruits? God hath been careful to cultivate us these Three, these Ten Years, that we might be fruitful, many would have been Saints with much less Graces; and yet all have not, perhaps, made one good Religious, or one good Christian. 'Tis not the Fault of the Ground in which I am planted; it is Holy Ground, and yields an Hundred-fold; even many of my Acquaintance, with less Advantages, bring forth much more Fruit than I.

What Benefit have I receiv'd by so many Masses? What am I the better for so many Communions? One single Communion is able to elevate a Soul to a Sublime Perfection; yet I who have receiv'd it may be One or Two Hundred Times, have not yet re-

form'd any one Fault. After so many Devotions am I more humble, more exact, more mortified? Do I love my God and Saviour more?

What is become of all the good Thoughts I have formerly had? Where is all my Fervour? What is become of that inward Peace, and true Pleasure, which I have sometimes experienc'd in my Devotions? What is become of all my holy Resolutions, and all my fair Promises? Alas! Perhaps we find no Traces of them all, but a sad Remembrance, which serves only to shew us how far we are from the State in which we ought to be.

Has not our Ingratitude towards God augmented proportionably to the Increase of his Blessings? And does it not seem that his Care to make us fruitful serves only to make us more unprofitable? But that which ought to humble us more, is, that after having spent Ten or Twenty Years in the Way of Perfection, we should think ourselves happy to be as much advanc'd as we were when we began. Yet still the Time passes, and the Year draws towards an end, when the Owner, weary of the Barrenness of his Fig tree, after so much Pains, is resolv'd to cut it down, and cast it into the Fire.

THIRD POINT.

Consider the Danger to which we expose our selves while we are unprofitable; and what Reason we have to fear, lest we draw upon our Heads the Vengeance of God, and the terrible Sentence of Reprobation, which he has pronounc'd against the Barren Tree.

How many Graces have we lost? Of how many have we depriv'd our selves? Those Graces which we have made useless by our Unfaithfulness are the Fruits of the Death and of the Blood of Christ, were sufficient to convert the Heathens, and increase the Number of Saints in Heaven, after having augmented the Number of true Christians on Earth. How many Years together has the Blessed Jesus visited us to see if we would bring forth Fruit, and hath either found nothing but Leaves, or such Fruit as the Vale of *Sodom* produces, Fair to the Eye, but Rottenness and Ashes at the Heart? Has he not then just Reason to say to us as he did to his Vineyard by the Prophet, *What could I do more for my Vineyard that I have not done in it?* Isa. 5. 4. After all my Care and Pains to improve it, when I expected it should bring forth good Grapes, it brought forth wild Grapes. May not our Saviour make us the same Reproach? We know it is too well Grounded; what Answer shall we give?

C S.

But...

But let us fear and tremble when we come to consider the just Vengeance which he resolves to take on this unfruitful Vine. *And now I will shew what I will do to my Vineyard; I will take away the Hedge thereof, and it shall be Eaten up; I will break down the Walls thereof, and it shall be Trodden down; I will lay it Waste, it shall not be Prun'd or Digg'd, but there shall come Briers and Thorns: And that its Ruin may be without Remedy, I will command the Clouds not to rain upon such ungrateful Ground which brings forth only bad Fruit.*

We may easily understand the Meaning of these Words; let us now apply them to our selves; we have hitherto brought forth only Leaves, and rotten Fruit, God will therefore deprive us of those great Helps which we render Useless. When that Hedge is once taken away, that inward Recollection once lost, our Hearts will run after every Object, and we shall become a Prey to our unruly Passions. God will speak no more to our Hearts; all the Exhortations and Counsels of wise and zealous Directors will make no Impression on us; the Source of Grace will be dry'd up, and what will become of a Soul in this wretched State? Which every one that continues Barren and Unprofitable must certainly expect.

Is there no Danger of our being like a dead Branch, which cut off from its Trunk, withers, and is good for nothing but the Fire?

Fire? Let us remember, the slothful Servant was not condemn'd for losing his Talent, but for not improving it *Matth.* 25, 26, &c. and 'tis not only the Tree that bringeth forth no Fruit, but every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit, shall be cut down, and burn'd, *Matth.* 3. 10.

We flatter our selves that God will wait a little longer, but perhaps *the Ax is already laid to the Root of the Tree*, *Matth.* 3. 10. This perhaps is the last Offer of Grace, the last Time that God will call upon us, the last Opportunity we shall ever have to become Fruitful. God hath already waited so long, he hath so often warned and exhorted us, he hath so often look'd whether we began to bear Fruit after all his Care and Pains, finding his Expectation not comply'd with, and justly incens'd at our long Barrenness, he is, it may be, ready to pronounce the Sentence which was given against the barren Fig-tree, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground?* *Luk.* 3. 7. Throw that unprofitable Tree into the Fire; why should I suffer it any longer to take up the Place of a Tree that would bring forth good Fruit?

'Tis in Consequence of this dreadful Sentence that so many who began well, but did not faithfully Correspond with the Divine Grace, have ended so ill. That so many who were call'd did not persevere, but have left their Place and their Crown to others, who became Wise by their Example.

Have

Have not we Reason to fear it may be our Case after all God has done to make us bear good Fruit? Have we made suitable Returns for all his Pains? Have not the few good Works we have done been spoil'd by ill Motives? And are we rich in Virtues and Merits?

O my God, enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, for no Man living is innocent before thee. I confess that I have been hitherto not only a Barren, but a Rotten Tree; I have been unprofitable in such fruitful Ground, and am good for nothing but to be cast into the Fire; but Oh! *Have Patience yet a little with me;* Mat. 18. 29 not for a Year but for One Day, and I trust, by the Assistance of thy Grace, to make such good Use of this Day, that I shall be no longer Unfruitful.

I dare hope that thou would'st not have inclin'd my Will to seek thee in Solitude; thou would'st not have inspir'd me with the Desire, nor afforded me Time for this Retreat, were it not that thou art willing to defer the Punishment I deserve for my Unfaithfulness to thy Grace, and for making no better Use of thy Assistance. Perhaps this is the last Day of thy Forbearance, and I have all the Reason in the World to apprehend that if I make not good Use of this Day, thou hast determin'd to delay my Sentence no longer. But I rely wholly upon thy infinite Mercy, and am resolv'd to spend this Day, that if

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it should be the last of my Life, I may be able to appear before thee, and present thee the Fruits of it.

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FIRST MEDITATION.
Of Man's End.

FIRST POINT.

Man was Created to serve God.

SECOND POINT.

Man was Created to save himself in serving God.

FIRST POINT.

Consider that we came not into the World by Chance, God had an End in drawing us out of Nothing, and that End was no other than his own Glory: He created us on-ly to know, love, and serve him; we glorifie him by knowing and loving him; we shew our Love by Serving him, and we serve him when we keep his Commandments.

This

This was his End and Design in our Creation; he could have not Created us but he could not Create us for another End: The Disorders of our Lives may indeed make us forget our Duty, but it can not change our ultimate End. Let us be never so dissolute, it will still be true that we are not sent into the World to heap up Riches, to acquire Honours, to enjoy a Multitude of Pleasures, and become Great: we are sent into the World only to serve God. Kings and their People, the Learned and the Ignorant, the Rich and the Poor are in the World only for this End. Tho' there be a great Difference in Men's Conditions, and a Subordination among them; tho' some are born Masters, and others Servants, they are all made for the same End, and all agree in this Point, that they are Created only to know, to love, and to serve God.

The Fire is not more created to give Heat, and the Sun Light, than Man is to love and serve God, who has made the almost infinite Number of Creatures only to help us in attaining this End, there being not one among them all which in it self does not furnish us with a Means to know God, a Motive to love, and a Way to serve him.

We need only consult our own Hearts on this Subject, and we shall find that the eternal Desire to be happy, which is implanted in our Natures, and the absolute

Impossible

Impossibility of being so in this Life, are a sensible Proof that Man was not made for any created Object. He must elevate his Heart to God, and he will immediately find a full and perfect Peace, which alone fixes all his Desires: He feels a Sweetness which he never felt any where else, and which is an evident Mark that God alone is his End, and the Center of his Rest.

We are then in the World only to serve God; this is the End of all Men; but do all Men live for that End? This is the only thing necessary, of which the Son of God speaks in the Gospel; do we look upon it as such?

How earnest are we to accomplish our Designs, to acquit our selves well of our Employments, and to serve our Princes? Are we as earnest to serve God? Do not Men generally Act as if they valued every thing but him? How often is the Title of a Man of the Gown, or of the Sword, prefer'd to that of God's Servant? How often do the Maxims of the World get the better of the Duties of a Christian? Every one has his Designs, and seeks his own Ends; surely we are not perswaded that God is our End, seeing we take so little Pains to seek him as such.

This Truth of God's being our End is one of the first Truths we learn, yet it is that which we think least of, and are least affected with, when we do think of it. We are

are us'd from our Cradles to hear that we are created only to serve God, but we are not all touch'd with the Meaning of those Words, which in all Probability we never truly understood, much less foresee their Consequences. For if it be true that I live in this World only to serve God, then every one of my Actions ought to be directed to him, and it may be I have not in all my Life done any one single Action only for him.

This is the Fundamental Verity of our Religion; do we live up to this important Truth? The whole Gospel is founded on this as its chief Maxim; but who that examines our Conduct and last Manner can think that God is our End? We think of every thing but God, as if we thought him nothing.

We find Time for every thing, except loving and serving God; we are delighted with Riches, Honours and Pleasures; God alone hath no Charms for us: And yet where can we find any true Pleasure but in him only? *Thou, Lord, hast created us for thyself, (saith St. Augustin) and our Hearts will be always uneasie and unquiet till they rest in thee.*

Have we not found this by frequent Experience in those very things whereof we have been most fond? Were we satisfied when we had obtain'd them? Has not the very Possession been sufficient to disgust us with them, and make us flight them?

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to no purpose to deceive our selves, that we may sin with less Fear; these very Disgusts, these continual Disquiets, are a secret Voice, which admonishes us that we are not made for the Creatures; that every thing in the World is but Vanity, Amusement, and Vexation of Spirit, and that we are made only for God.

We cannot chuse or make any other End to our selves; he who gave us our Being hath put us under an indispensable Necessity of returning to him; if he had left us at Liberty to make Choice of God, the Infinite Good, for our last End, could we have thought of any other? And now that he has subjected us to the happy Necessity of having no other, we are very little concerned to attain it.

Ungrateful Men! Are you not well enough provided for to have God for your last End? *How long will you halt between Two Opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him,* Leg. 8. 21. Why will you be divided between God and the World? If God be your only Master, why do you not serve him alone?

My God! What do I stay for? Am I too young? Have I too much Health? Am I afraid to serve thee too long, if I begin soon? I who am left in the World only to serve thee.

Alas! I made no Difficulty of spending the best Part of my Life in unprofitable Amusements, in the Service of the World;
and

and now, that I am disabus'd and convinc'd of my Folly, shall I refuse thee the rest of my Life? Shall I defer One Moment to love thee?

'Tis strange that I stand in need of many Reasons and Reflections to resolve upon a thing of this Importance, and which I am fully convinc'd; but it is very strange that all these Reflections do not make me resolve.

Do I stay till I am at the last Extremity, till I am told that I have but a few Days left to think seriously of my Conversion?

No, my God, it is resolv'd; thou hast made me only for thy self, and for thy future I will be wholly thine: 'Tis true, I begin late to serve thee, but I am resolv'd to have this Satisfaction in Death whenever it comes, that I did begin to serve thee.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that God who has created us only to serve him, is pleas'd by a singular Goodness so to order it, that we cannot serve him without saving our selves. He did from the beginning design our Eternal Happiness in creating us for his Glory; and seeing that Eternal Happiness is no otherwise propos'd than as a Reward, our whole Life is given us only that we may deserve it by Obedience to those Laws and Commandments which he hath made for that End: A

the Desire of Happiness, which is natural to every Man, does, as it were by Instinct, advertise us in the midst of our Disorders, that we are plac'd in the World only to work out our Eternal Salvation in Heaven.

The Checks of our Consciences, which are hardly ever quite stifled, cry aloud to us, that we put our selves in danger of being lost, when we forget our End never so little. And are not the Fears of Hell, and of the dreadful Judgments of God, which shake the most hardned Sinners, a sufficient Monitor, telling us incessantly that we are in the World only to be saved?

This is the only Business of all the World; this is our last End; we are not here to obtain great Employments or Dignities, to render our selves excellent in this or that Profession, nor to establish a Reputation by our good Qualities: You are rais'd to that Dignity, you are put in that Station, God has given you those Qualities, and made you successful, only that these may be Helps to your salvation, may be the Means to bring you more easily to him, your last End.

We are then created only that we may be saved, that we may avoid an Eternity of Woe in Hell, and obtain Happiness in Paradise, which shall never end. We are made only for Heaven; we are but banish'd here, or at best but Travellers, who should rejoice when they find themselves near the End of their Journey, or their Banishment.

But

But do we look upon our selves as such? Have we these Thoughts of Heaven? Would any one that examines our Conduct think that we believe our Salvation to be our last End? Men easily find Means to attain their Ends; surely there are but few who make Heaven their great Design, since there are so few who take the right Methods to obtain it.

The End of a Merchant in his Trade, of a Scholar in his Studies, of a Courtier in his Carriage, of a Soldier in the midst of Dangers, is easily known; but is it as visible that every Man in his Station and Employment seeks only God, and the Salvation of his Soul as his last End?

Yet what does it profit a Man to raise a great Fortune, to gain the whole World, and lose his Soul? What is there in all the World that can make him amends for the Loss of that? It would have been much better for him not to have been Born, than not to be Saved.

Let us remember, that if we do not make God our Sovereign Happiness, he will be our Sovereign Misery; we may be without every thing else, but we cannot be without this Good; tho' a Man be poor, forsaken, despis'd or forgotten, if he will save his Soul he will be happy to all Eternity, and want nothing; but let him be never so Rich, Happy, and Esteem'd in the World, if he is Damn'd, he is miserable for ever.

What are those great and extraordinary Men who fill'd the World with their brave Actions? What are they the better for all Honour they gain'd, if they are damn'd? Suppose you saw the richest Man in the World on his Death-Bed; one who had enjoy'd all sorts of Pleasures; who had arriv'd to the highest Pitch of Glory and Greatness; who had been successful in all Undertakings, and had only neglected his Soul; ask him, What do all your Wealth, your Greatness, and your Pleasures avail you? All these are past and gone, as if they had never been; but your Soul, which you have lost, and those Pains, which are the sad Consequences of that Loss, will never pass away.

Let us consider what Thoughts we shall be in those last Moments: What shall we then think of every thing that is now an Obstacle to our Salvation? How will our great Designs and Projects, which look us up entirely, appear then?

We venture our Souls rather than disoblige a Friend, than lose an Opportunity of enriching our Children, or of distinguishing ourselves in the World. What will our Opinion of all this be when Death comes? Will the Remembrance of all past Greatness comfort a Man who knows he is falling into Hell? Will those pretended Friends be much oblig'd to us for having ruin'd our selves to please them? Shall we be much oblig'd to them who are the Cause of our Damnation

Damnation, and for whose Sakes we are lost?

Wretched Father! That labours and sweats, that ruins his Health, and shortens his Life, to get an Estate for his Children and is damn'd for his Pains; who will thank him for it?

Who would not be rich, if an earnest Desire to be so were sufficient? We may be Saints if we will by the Help of Grace which is never wanting, and yet we are unwilling to be so: And indeed, if we are not Saints, it is because we will not.

'Tis surprizing, that Men who love themselves so much should reflect so little on a Matter of this Consequence. That Men, who in all other things are wise and prudent, should yet every Day go out of the World, without having once seriously considered why they were sent into it, whence they came, and whether they are to go after Death, and yet cheat themselves at last with an Appearance of Conversion.

O Divine Saviour! Where is that passionate Desire of our Salvation which moves thee to do such great things? How long wilt thou suffer so many Souls to be lost for whom thou hast paid so great a Price? Art not thou still our God, and are not we thy People? Canst thou ever forget that thou art my Saviour? I have not indeed made a right Use of my Happiness, in being design'd only for thee; I have forgot the

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place my Affections upon the Creatures.
have wander'd out of the Way that leads
my last End, and refus'd to obey the
voice of the good Shepherd who call'd

But now I see and repent of my
wandering; however unfaithful I have been,
Sense thou hast given me of my Un-
faithfulness, makes me hope that thou wilt
show Mercy on me: Thou lovedst me when
I did not love thee; and when I did all
I could to make thee hate me, thou sought
me even when I fled most from thee. O
God! Wilt thou refuse me now that
I am resolv'd to love thee? Wilt thou hide
thyself from me now that I seek thee? I can-
not fear this from so Infinite, Good, and
merciful a God.

Da acknowledge that I was made only to
love and serve thee, and I am resolv'd O
God, by the Assistance of thy Grace,
I will both love and serve thee. And
I hope in thy Mercy, that since thou hast
mercifully born with my Disobedience so
long, thou wilt now be so gracious as to
forgive it.

SECOND

SECOND MEDITATION

*Of the Means which are given us
to attain our Ultimate End.*

FIRST POINT. *Of the Means common to all Christians.*

SECOND POINT. *The particular Means proper for each Christian.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that God, not content to have created us for himself as for our Ultimate End, has out of his great Goodness indispensably engag'd us to seek him by the numerous Means which he hath given us to attain that End. Every Creature taken in its self is an Help to our Knowledge and Love of him; and 'tis only our Abuse of them that makes any of them Hindrances. The Happiness and Misfortunes of our Lives, the Chastisements wherewith God corrects our Unfaithfulness, and our very Faults may be so many Furtherances of our Salvation. Even the Devices and Temptations

tions of our mortal Enemy, the Devil, may be a Means to save us.

Without Grace it is impossible to attain our Ultimate End ; all our Endeavours without it are vain ; 'tis an Article of Faith that we may be wanting to the Grace of God: There is not one Soul in Hell who is not damn'd by his own Fault.

We are weak, the Occasions of Sin are many, and our corrupted Hearts are violently inclin'd to it, but can we have greater Assistance to prevent our Falls, and raise us up again when we are fallen? Are we sensible of the Facility with which we may work out our Salvation, if we will have Recourse to those excellent Means which God hath put into our Hand? So many Sacraments, whereby all the Merits of our Saviour are apply'd to us, in which we are, as it were, bath'd in his Blood, wherein our Soul feeds on the Body and Blood of that Divine Redeemer, are without doubt most effectual and easy Means to attain our great End.

It was easy for the Disciples to be Saints, who had their Divine Saviour always with them: And shall it be more difficult for us who have him continually present in the Eucharist? Their Happiness consisted in having their Requests granted; what should hinder our obtaining of him as they what-
ever we desire?

Another very effectual Means is frequent Prayer, for our Saviour hath solemnly engag'd his Word that he will grant whatever we ask in his Name.

His Promises are without Exception, not limited to any sort of Men; do but ask. Every Body surely is able to ask, and they who will not, do most certainly value Heaven at a very low Rate, since they think it not worth their Asking.

If we had only the Sacrifice of the Altar, would not our Salvation be sure? What Grace, what Assistance can we need which our Redeemer, who gives himself as an Earnest of his Grace, cannot obtain? And how can we doubt his so often reiterated Promises that he desires our Happiness? We are all Debtors to the Justice of God, and stand in need of extraordinary Helps; One Mass, one Communion, bestows on us a Treasure sufficient to pay all our Debts, and supply all our Needs. Let us offer up that Host to his Eternal Father, who we are sure cannot but be pleas'd with it; it is sufficient to blot out the Sins of all Mankind; and whose Fault will it be if it does not efface ours?

Certainly if God had left us to chuse the most proper Means of Salvation, we should never have been able to find so many, so easy, and so effectual; we should never have thought of proposing what Christ has done for us. And yet what Use have we hitherto made of those Means

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And what must we think of our selves, and of our Unprofitableness under them? Surely we have no great mind to be saved if we lose our Souls in the midst of so powerful and such easy Means of Salvation; what Excuse shall we invent, what Shadow of Pretence can we have, to justify our selves if we neglect them.

What shall we answer to the Reproaches of the Heathens? What shall we answer when our Saviour himself reproaches and confounds us with the Example of those Pagans, who only out of a vain Desire of Glory, and for an imaginary Recompence were such Lovers of Vertue, such Haters of Vice, and even superstitiously devout? What would they have done if they had enjoy'd our Helps?

What Regret must a Christian have who is damn'd with all those Advantages? What shall I be the better for them if I be damn'd? And what must I expect if I make no better Use of them for the future?

SECOND POINT.

Consider that besides those general Helps, common to all Christians, every Man has some Means proper for him, whereby he may easily become a great Saint. His Temper, Education, Parts; his very Passions, if rightly manag'd, will much contribute to it. The Grace of God commonly

monly makes Use of every one of these; and whether our Inclinations be good or bad, we may with a little Resolution make them all serve to our Progress in Vertue.

Every Sickness and unfortunate Accident of our Lives is sent on purpose to bring us nearer to our last End, by separating us, or at least by weaning our Affections from sensible Objects, which take up too much of our Time and Thoughts.

But the surest and most effectual Means are those which every Man meets with in the Condition wherein God hath plac'd him. Each State of Life is a different Way, by which the Divine Providence leads us to our Ultimate End. It is a great Errour to think that we cannot attain Perfection without doing something extraordinary; we may be very eminent Saints only by acquitting our selves exactly of the Duties of our Callings. The virtuous Woman, that Heroine, so highly prais'd in Holy Writ, acquir'd all those Merits only by taking Care of her Family. And *Jesus Christ* himself for thirty Years together thought he could do nothing more becoming him than to discharge the Duties of that humble and poor Condition which he had chosen.

All other Ways are subject to Illusion; we deceive our selves by doing much, unless we do what we ought; he does what

he ought who fulfils the Will of God, which we are sure we fulfil when we are exact in the smallest Duties of our Callings.

They who live in the World need not seek Means of Sanctification out of their ordinary Course of Life, in the Duties of each Day they will find Matter enough to make them Saints; and they are inexcusable before God if they neglect those Means, since they take much more Pains for the World than he requires them to take for him, that they may be saved.

Religious Men find in their State all, and indeed the only Means of Perfection that are proper for them; which consist in a punctual Observation of their Rule and Vows. Those Rules have already made the Saints that are honour'd in their Order; and he who has embrac'd them, can never hope to be a Saint by any other Means.

Don't pretend that they seem of small Consequence, that they do not bind you under Pain of Sin; remember there is nothing little in the Service of God. Did you enter into Religion to seek Perfection only when you were forc'd to it? How will you distinguish your self from other Religious, if it be not by Exactness in your particular Duties? And how will you pretend to merit Supplies of Grace proportionable to your Necessities,

if it be not by this exact Observation of your Rule.

We need not wonder that so many Communion, and so many Helps, have no Effect on us; and that after all those Advantages we are more Lukewarm, and have Reason to fear, tho' we seem to have made great Progress: 'Tis because we neglect the particular Means which we have in our own Hands; this renders all the rest Ineffectual. As the best Physick does us more Harm than Good when we neglect the least Precautions.

Let not a Religious Man, who is careless of observing his Rule, expect any Benefit by his Communion; let not a worldly Person, who hath no Care of his Family, who neglects the Duties of his particular Station, expect to be the better for all his pretended good Works; how should we like a Servant that means never so Well, that does never so many Good things, if he does not his Duty? And how can he do his Duty, who does not do what his Master Commands?

Let us now reflect seriously on our Conduct; what Use have we made of the Means of Salvation? Have we made good Use of the general?

God will not only examine and severely punish the Evil we have done, but the Good we have not done when it was in our Power, and the Good we have not done Well. Are we ready to give an Account

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Account of our Lives immediately? All the Actions of our Lives should have God for their End; and can we find one among them all that was done only for him?

Let us inquire what can be the Cause, that the Sacraments and the Spiritual Exercises have hitherto done us so little Good. Let us impartially examine what use we have made of the Means of Perfection that are in our Hands. If we be engag'd in the World, how have we discharg'd the Duties of our Condition? If we be Religious or Ecclesiasticks, how have we acquitted our selves of our Obligations, and observ'd our Rule? By this Examination we shall be able to excite a hearty Sorrow for our past Faults, and to make such Resolutions as may be Effectual for our future Amendment.

THIRD MEDITATION.

*Of the Sentiments we shall have at
the Hour of Death.*

FIRST POINT. *The Sentiments of
a Dying Man, who has led a Sinful
and Lukewarm Life.*

SECOND POINT. *The Sentiments
of a Dying Man, who has liv'd a
Fervent and Virtuous Life.*

FOR the better fixing your Imagination and to avoid Distraction, suppose yourself upon your Death-Bed, having but a few Hours to live, reduc'd as you will be one Day, to the last Extremity of Weakness, almost Motionless, continually unquiet, your Soul disorder'd with Fear; your Heart already seiz'd by Death's Convulsions, your Breath failing, a cold Sweat spreading itself over your whole Body, which smells already like a Dead Corps, your Cheeks hollow, your Colour chang'd, your Hair moist with a mortal Damp, your Eyes sunk, Staring frightfully, leaving you only Sight to discover your pitiful Condition and

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and just ready to close themselves for ever. Suppose your self abandon'd by all you lov'd in the World, and upon the Point of expiring in the Arms of some Domestick, or unknown Person.

Then for a second Prelude, beg of God to assist you with his Grace, that you may be thoroughly affected with the Consequences of that important Moment, whereon Eternity depends, and so penetrated by it, that it may make the same Impression on you now, as it will do when you see it approach; and that you may be thereby excited to take the surest Methods of Salvation.

FIRST POINT.

Consider how strangely a dying Man is chang'd; he who a few Days ago was strong, and in perfect Health, enjoying his Riches and Honours, and contriving great Projects, is all on a sudden confin'd to his Bed, reduc'd to Extremity, unable to help himself, incapable of Pleasure, forc'd to abandon all, and be abandon'd by all. My God! What is Man, tho' never so rich and great, since a few Hours Sickness is able to make him useless to all the World, and render all the World of no use to him?

We think our selves happy when we have Riches enough to serve us many Years; but alas! What are we the better for many Years Riches, if we have not many Years to enjoy them?

D 5.

What

What is able to comfort a Sinner in this miserable Condition, when the Remembrance of past Pleasures leave only a mortal Regret behind them, and the Fear of future Pains makes them already begin to feel them? When God and Man, when every thing in the World, conspire to terrify and affright him? How do the Tears of Friends cut him to the Heart, and their Assistants increase his Apprehensions? How sensible must the Grief of his Wife, the Tears of his Children, and the Hurry of his Servants be to him? With what Fear has he Recourse to desperate Remedies? And what a Terror is it to find those Remedies ineffectual?

And when to calm his Frights his Confessor approaches, can we think that the Sight of him allays his Trouble? He sweats and is quite confounded, and in this Agony he is to prepare for Death; but is this a fit Time? Is he in a Condition to prepare? When Fear and Trouble has weakned and clouded his Reason, how can he go about it? He speaks not his own Thoughts or Sentiments, he only repeats what he hears his Confessor say; he neither knows what he says, nor what he ought to say.

Even Jesus Christ himself, whose Presence in this last Hour is the great Consolation of a dying Saint, visits the dying Sinner only to upbraid him, and make him more sensible of his Impieties. And, indeed, what

Benefit can he expect from the last Sacraments, being so ill prepar'd to receive them?

With whom shall he find Ease? For as soon as he has receiv'd the Rights of the Church, his Friends and Relations retire. Let us now consider what his Thoughts will be when the Priest only stays to present him the Crucifix, and inform him that there is no further Hopes of Recovery; that now being bereft of all Creatures, Jesus Christ alone must be his Refuge and Consolation. Jesus Christ crucified must be now your only Hope; you must seek Strength in those Sacred Wounds against the Fear of Death, for they are able to soften all its Rigours, to sweeten its Bitterness: Receive then, dear Brother, this comfortable Object, in whose Arms I leave you.

This is the End of all the vain Projects, of the Greatness and Pleasures of worldly Men: In what Condition is a Libertine who has neglected Jesus Christ all his Life; which he has spent in Sin and Pleasure, and in an extreme Carelessness of Eternity? What Consolation can he find now in holding a Crucifix in his Hand?

If he has no Resemblance of a Crucify'd Jesus, if he was never sensibly affected with the terrible Verities of our Holy Religion, but laugh'd at the most serious Exercises of Piety, what Thoughts can he have when he has nothing but a Crucifix to entertain himself withal?

He may indeed make a good Use of the little Time that is left; but alas! his Weakness and Fears discompose his Reason, and leave him not the Liberty that is necessary to use it well.

Yet the Sick Man dies, and there is little Hopes that the Prayers of the Church should give him any Consolation; they are indeed full of Comfort for those who die well, but what Comfort can they afford a dying Sinner, whom every Word reproaches with the Disorders of his Life.

What Terrour must it be to him to hear the Priest pronounce those Words *Christian Soul, go out of the World*, to him who lov'd the World so much, who perhaps never lov'd any thing else, nor ever made one Step towards Heaven? Go out there is no more to do; you must leave all your Delights, tho' you be never fond of them, and unwilling to quit them, you would leave nothing, but you must die to all.

The charitable Recommendation, *May'st thou enter into the Habitation of Peace and may'st thou dwell in the Holy Peace of Zion*, can be no Comfort to one who knows they have no Reason to make that Prayer for him.

How can he expect any Benefit from that Petition, *Pity, O Lord, his Sighs, and let his Tears prevail with thee*, if his Grief proceeds only from the Fondness of the World; and if he weeps because he

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forc'd to quit it, and because he can sin no longer.

The Priest goes on, *Look, O Lord, upon thy Creature, made by thy self, and not by Strange Gods, own the Work of thy Hands;* but if the dying Man has always lov'd the Creature more than his Creatour; if his Life has not been at all conformable to the Maxims of *Christ*, how can he be like his Saviour in this Last Hour? What must he expect, seeing he is not like him? And how terrible must his Apprehensions be of what is to come after Death?

Great God! In what a Condition is a dying Man, torn with Grief and Despair, without Hope? If he have yet his Senses, left, every thing that presents it self, every thing he hears, is an Addition to his Fear and Trouble; and when he has lost his Senses, when external Objects can make no more Impression on him, then the Remembrance of all his Sins, of all the Ill he has done, of all the Good he has neglected, when it was in his Power, or which he has done Ill, racks and torments him more.

How many are his Reflections? Yet all to no purpose; he then sees his Error, but it is too late to reap any Benefit by it: He repents of a great many things, but that Repentance adds new Force to his Torments, because he knows it will do him no Good. How does he grieve for not having done his Duty when he was able?

How

How does he despair of being able to do what he has left undone? He would not reflect seriously on the great Truths of the Gospel while he might have done it to good purpose; now he reflects, and reflects at leisure, but 'tis a cruel Leisure, for all the Fruit of those Reflections is Despair and Rage.

Now he is sensible of all the Disorders of his Life; he is now convinc'd of his Errour, but it's too late. Oh! What must the Sentiments of a Person consecrated to God be, when he sees his Eternal Condition ready to be decided, and remembers how imperfect he hath been in a State which requires so much Perfection? To what end did I make such ado, in leaving the World, and entring into Religion? Was it to follow the Maxims of the World there? God hath called me by his Grace to an Ecclesiastical or Religious State, have I made good Use of that Grace? I quitted all, and chose that perfect Way of Life, that I might die in Peace, by dying like a Saint; but (wretched Creature that I am) did I consider that a happy Death is the Consequence of a holy Life? How often have I taught others this Doctrine? Oh! Why have I made no better Use of what I taught? How have I been distracted in Prayer? How many Masses and Communion have done me no Good? How often have I confess'd my Sins, without leaving them?

How

How many Graces have I rendred useleſs? How many good Works have I loſt for want of right Motives? O my God! Why have I taken ſo much Pains to loſe my ſelf? Have left my Relations, been inſenſible to their Tears, and all their Caresses, ſurmounted ſo many Difficulties, that I might ſecure my Salvation: And by loving my Eaſe too much, by ſetting my Heart on trivial Matters, which one would have been aſham'd of in a Secular State, I have been a Lukewarm Religious; I am now on my Death-Bed torn with Remorſe, oppreſs'd with Fear and Trouble, and having Cauſe to doubt poſitively of my Salvation. Oh! 'Tis terrible to pay ſo dear for ſuch a Death.

And indeed what elſe can be the Conſequence of a careleſs Life? When we come to conſider ſeriouſly, as we ſhall certainly do then, that the leaſt Grace we have abus'd was ſufficient to convert an Infidel, and yet ſo many of them have not made one good Religious, or good Chriſtian. When we ſhall diſcover a Multitude of Faults, which we took no Notice of before; or which, through the Violence of our Paſſions, and our Indifference, we took for ſmall ones, but which now appear to be great Sins, what Comfort can an imperfect Religious find then? Will he ſeek it from the Saints of his Order? He hath diſhonour'd them by his Conduct. Will he ſeek it in his Rule? He has not obſerv'd

observ'd it? Will he hope to find Comfort in God? He hath offended and incens'd him by serving him ill, after having receiv'd so many Favours from him.

How dismal must his Apprehensions be after an irregular Life, when he reflects, I have but a few Hours to live; if I be out of the State of Grace, I am lost forever; and I have not only some Reason to fear that I am not in the State of Grace (which Fear the greatest Saints have) but Cause to doubt positively that I am not.

In this Extremity all that he hath heard of Judgment, of Hell and Eternity, comes afresh in his Mind, and affright him in a terrible Manner. 'Tis wonderful that he who some few Days ago was full of Doubts and Uncertainties, is now fully convinc'd of the Truths which he was then so unwilling to believe. Behold his Fears, see how he trembles and quakes at the Thought of Death and Judgment.

We sometimes meet with Men who turn the most serious Exercises of Piety into Railery, and call the Exactness of those fervent Souls, who are punctual in performing the smallest Duties of their Station, Preciseness and Weakness. Let these Men, who imagine they have reason to censure and accuse thus, continue to think so at this Hour, and maintain their Character of Wits to the last if they can. If they were in the right, let them please themselves now with calling Exactness and Devotion Preciseness

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and Scrupulosity. They have made a false Conscience to themselves, and under its shadow they lull themselves in a false Security, let them now maintain that imaginary System. Alas ! 'Tis the Remembrance of these very things that now drives them to Despair.

While we are in Health, our Passions and us, ill Examples seduce us ; we are arm'd with present Objects, the Hurry of business takes us up, and we industriously avoid serious Reflection on the Truths of Religion ; even our Faith is half dead, stifled by the Corruption of our Manners, but at the Approach of Death it revives to terrify and distract us ; like the Faith of the Devils, it makes us tremble, but does not convert us.

Every Body is convinc'd that when Death comes we shall repent our Neglect of Mortification ; our worldly, voluptuous Lives ; our having done so very few good Works, and having liv'd no better ; and which is exceeding strange, after all these Reflections, after being fully convinc'd of them, how few take Pains to amend their Lives ? My God ! How long will we make these useful Reflections, and yet live so unlike Christians ?

Death makes us see clearly ; then our Prejudices and Prepossessions vanish ; formerly we saw, but were not sensible of the Vanity and Emptiness of every thing in the world ; but now we both see and feel it, and

and wonder at our Stupidity in finding no sooner, and in not discovering our double Want. We find we were deceiv'd, and at the same time find, to our unspeakable Anguish, that we are ruin'd by that Error, and that we cannot recover what has made us lose.

A dead Man is indeed a mournful, but useful Sight, very proper to disabuse us, and to alienate our Affections from the Pleasures of this Life; the most accomplished Man in the World inspires Horror; when he is dead immediately all is silent, the Corps is cover'd, the Curtains drawn, and every Body retires. Where is now his Beauty and good Mien! Where is his agreeable Humour? What is become of all his Projects and great Fortune? You see what the End of all. But what is become of his Soul? And what must be done with this corrupted Body, which begins already to grow offensive? Notwithstanding all its Greatness, notwithstanding all its Charms, tho' the most lovely in the World, every body flies it: Husband, Wife, Children, Relations, Friends, Neighbours, Servants, all striving to be rid of it: Those who lov'd it best are most desirous to have it carried away, and most uneasy to hear it spoke of; its nearest and best Friends hire Men to throw it to the Worms; they make Hurdles to nail it up; they hide it in the Ground, and we cannot, without Horror, think of its Condition a few Days after.

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You are forgot as soon as buried; every one returns to his Business; your Friends seek other Friends, take new Measures, and hardly think any more of you. They concern themselves no more about you than you had never liv'd; no Body fears your Anger, nor desires your Favour; they often undo all you had done; within a little time you are not so much as talk'd of.

At your Death indeed some Tears may possibly be shed by your Relations and Friends for the Loss of some Pleasure or Advantage which they expected from you: Tears are common, but the greatest Part of those Tears are only Grimace; they will soon be comforted; especially if they are by your Death, and any Part of your Estate fall to them. We may guess what others will do for us by what we have done for them after their Death. Our Grief for a Friend and Relation has been soon appeas'd; and though they were so wretched as to have ruin'd their Souls for our Sakes, have we thought ourselves much oblig'd to them?

After all this can we make any great account of the World and its Pleasures? It is indeed very surprizing that we think so seldom of Death; but 'tis much more surprizing that we can think once of it, and not be converted. How many live as if they were sure they should never die, and

and were to die more than once? As they should lose nothing by dying ill, as if they could recover that Loss after Death? Is not this our Case? And will our Thought be on a Death-Bed when we call to Mind the Reflections we now make, if we reap no Benefit from them?

SECOND POINT.

Consider how happy a thing it is to die when one has liv'd well; Death is the Punishment of Sin, it can therefore be a Trouble only to those who are defil'd with Sin: It must needs be a Subject of great Joy and Pleasure to those who have led a virtuous Life. How can they die unhappy since they die Saints?

The Death of a Righteous Man, saith the Prophet, is precious before God, and consequently dear to him; for one always esteems and takes care of what is precious: 'Tis no Matter to a good Man to die destitute of all Humane Aid; though he die suddenly, he never dies unprepared; God takes a peculiar Care of him; he dies happily, because his Death is precious in the Sight of his God.

Every thing ought to contribute to Consolation; how great must his Joy be when he reflects that he has liv'd as a Christian, and led a Penitential Life?

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What of what is to come will most certainly alleviate the Pains of his present conditions.

He is now got over all the Difficulties the Way to Heaven; Fasting, Mortification, Labours, Austerity, Penance, all is over. What a Satisfaction is it in Death to know that he hath done all the Good that was required of him, and avoided the Ill which he might have done; especially when he thinks on the Remorse of Conscience which would have tormented him if he had done otherwise.

The longest Life seems then but a Moment; from the Cradle to the Tomb; what a Satisfaction must it be to a dying Christian, that instead of omitting, he has done his Duty? What would the greatest Fortune avail me, says the dying Man? What Good could powerful Friends do me now? If I had spent my time in Pleasures, and follow'd the Maxims of the World, of what Use would they be to me now? I therefore condemn now, and will condemn to all Eternity the Maxims of the World; all the Friendships on Earth cannot defer my Death one Moment; I am for ever banish'd from all Company; the Pleasures of the World are not able to moderate one of my least Pains; if I had fix'd my Heart on them, I should now have nothing left but the Remorse of having weary'd my self for my present Ruin. He applauds himself for having

ving been so wise as to contemn those Vnities which would leave him now whether he would or no, if he had not le them. 'Tis sweet, 'tis comfortable, at the Hour of Death, to think that one has le them.

His great Business was to save his Soul to make sure of a happy Eternity, if he had been successful in every thing else, and had not secur'd his Salvation, he would have done nothing; he was in Danger of not doing it; and what would become of him if he had not? He trembles with Fear at this Thought; but having by the Grace of God, apply'd himself chiefly to that great Work, the same Thought fills him with Comfort.

Let us suppose that a Man has taken a long Journey about an important Business, which his Fortune, his Honour, and his Life depends; that he comes just time enough to have Audience of his Prince, and to justify his Conduct, and finds that if he had stay'd an Hour or two longer he would have come too late, have lost his Cause, and been condemn'd to Death; how glad is he that he did not trifle away his Time upon the Road? But if by his Diligence he not only sav'd his Life, but gain'd an Estate, honours and Dignities, and became his Prince's Favourite, would he repine because he miss'd some little Pleasures, and neglected some Conveniences, which he might have found in the Way if he had stay'd for the

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by staying for which he knew several who came on the same Business with had lost their Cause and their Lives? remembrance of past Dangers gives us real sure, and we delight to talk of them; the Difficulties we have gone through the Love of God will be very sweet as at the Hour of Death.

Did it ever come into a Man's Thoughts his Death-Bed to regret that he had diverted and pleas'd himself enough in the World? We very often repent the things pleas'd our selves too much; we regret the Time we have thrown away in vain and worldly Diversions, while we neglected Mortification. Alas! Are not our Lives full of nothing else but these things of which we repent when we are to die?

Did ever Religious Man, at the Hour of Death, repent his having willingly and notoriously left his Relations, his Wealth, the World, which he must now leave whether he will or no, and gain nothing by his leaving it? An imperfect Religious Man repent of his Imperfections, but not of his being Religious.

The Thoughts of Death terrifie the Stout and make the Wicked tremble, but fill the Saints with Joy. He is a Man, says St. John Climacus, that not fear Death; but he is a Saint desires it. Then it is that those who have lov'd their Redeemer find a mighty

mighty Sweetness in receiving the *Viaticum* being able to say, *Come, Lord Jesus, my Heart is ready.*

A Crucifix must needs be welcome on the Death Bed to a Man who has born the Cross all his Life, and liv'd by it. What Pleasure does he hear himself invited to leave the World which he values so little, and to take Possession of the *New Jerusalem* after which he has sigh'd; he is like a Prince recall'd to his Throne, like a valiant Souldier whom his Sovereign sends for to come and receive the Reward of all his Fatigues and Combats.

'Tis true, the Sight of his Sins may justly make him fear, but the View of the Crucifix, the Prayers of the Church, the Assistance of the Saints, and especially of the Queen of Saints, and of *Jesus Christ* himself, inspires him with Confidence in the Mercy of God, which no Temptation or Trouble is able to disturb.

The Sight of his good Works makes him confident, but not vain, being perswaded that the Divine Goodness, who has guided him by his Grace during this Life, will not leave him in this last Hour; his Firmness and Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and the Remembrance of her past Favours will afford him no less Joy and Comfort. This fervent Soul lov'd his Saviour, and long'd to be with him, and now rejoices in the Expectation of that happy Moment when

will unite him to that dear Saviour for ever.
 What a Sweetness does he find in pronouncing the Name of Jesus, whom he lov'd with so much Tenderness and Fervour?

What a Difference is there between the Death of a Saint, and the Death of a wicked Man? A Difference that is seen even after their Death. The Corps of the former inspires Veneration; notwithstanding the natural Horrour we have for dead Bodies, and for every thing about them; so that we are not unwilling to come near them; neither the Body of a Saint, nor any thing about it, frights us: We are not afraid to enter into the Chamber where it lyes, we are earnest to get something that belong'd to it, we kiss it, we strive to touch it: His Death is not only agreeable to him, but to us too; such is the Power of Holiness, that it takes away all the Horrour of a Corps, and renders it venerable and precious. We are charm'd with the Death of a Saint; is it not then very strange that our Desire to be like him does not excite us to live better.

We are all ready to say with the Prophet, *Let me die the Death of the Just, and let my latter End be like his:* But to what Purpose is this lazy Wish while we will not quit his Life? Are we ignorant that the Satisfaction which the Saints find in Death is the ordinary Fruit of the Holiness of their Lives? We should have liv'd like them,

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in a continual Mortification of our Passions, in an entire Renouncing and Contempt of the World, an uninterrupted Practice of all Christian Virtues, and an exact Performance of the Duties of our Station.

What is the Reason that we take no more Care to prepare for Death, seeing there is nothing of so great Importance, that all depends upon dying well; and that if we die ill, we can never repair our Loss? Oh! 'tis a wretched thing to be reduc'd in the last Moment of our Lives to unprofitable Regrets.

Tho' you were the greatest Admirer of the World, tho' you were never so fond of it, there is no more World for you when you are once dead. What do you carry away with you? What Reward does the World give you for having been so long its Slave? What Vexation, Regret, and Despair for having serv'd it? They are true wise who leave the World first; who do not stay till it leaves them, but despise it before it despises them.

'Tis a sad Spectacle to see a Man carried out of a great House which he had newly built or purchas'd, and into which he never must return more. All his Riches, his Goods, and whatever he had in the World is now in the Possession of another. When are all those great Men who made such a Bustle in the World, and appear'd in such Splendour? They are gone, they are

thing now; and the World, who considers Men no longer than they are useful, thinks no more of them; they are in their Graves, their Flesh putrify'd, their Bones calcin'd, their whole Body turn'd into Dust. How little do we think of those who liv'd before us, unless it be to blame their Actions, or publish their Faults? And this is all the Recompence we are to expect even from those whom we have most oblig'd. With what Satisfaction would Men die, if they did for God but the Hundredth Part of what they do for the World to no Purpose?

My God! What Benefit shall I reap by these Reflections? What Thoughts, what Anguish, shall I have upon a Death-bed, if these Considerations do not make me fruitful? Am I so fully perswaded that there is no solid Satisfaction but in thee? And shall I seek it any where else? Thou only canst make me happy both in Life and Death.

The Saints were wise, hated themselves, and kept their Bodies in Subjection, never sparing them while they liv'd; why then do not I endeavour to be wise after their Example; They applaud themselves for having liv'd a mortify'd and holy Life in Opposition to the Maxims of the World. My God! What Good will these Pious Reflections do me, if I defer my Conversation any longer? I give thee hearty Thanks for affording me this time to prepare for Death; I know that I must begin by a Holy Life,

and I am resolv'd to delay no longer, but begin this very Moment.

Of Preparation for Death.

S E C T I.

Of the Necessity of preparing for Death.

ALL the World agrees that nothing is of so great Concern as Death ; that it is the most difficult thing in the World to die well ; that we can never recover ourselves if we die ill ; yet there is hardly any thing for which Men make so little Preparation as for Death.

If we could die twice, our Imprudence would not be so great ; we might have some Hope to repair our Fault, by expiating a wicked Life and an unprepar'd Death together. But we can die but once, and we know that an Eternity of Happiness or Misery depends on that once.

We are not only bound to live well (saith an Eminent Servant of God) but much more to die well, for the most Pious Life will avail nothing if it be not follow'd by a Holy Death. Have we labour'd for Heaven? Have we led a Holy Life

We are so much the more concern'd to die holily, that we may not lose the Fruit of our Pains. 'Tis true, a happy Death is the ordinary Fruit of a Holy Life; but 'tis no less true, that if we die ill we lose all the Merit of the most exact Life, and all those Merits cannot secure us a happy Death.

Whence comes it then, that we take no more Care to prepare for Death, than if we were certain that we should never die, or that we should die well, or that we should die more than once? Whence is it that we act as if we could lose nothing by dying ill, or as if it were a very easie thing to die well?

Can we be ignorant of the Danger we run, of acquitting our selves ill of what we ever try'd; especially when we don't know how to go about it? Can we be ignorant that it is the hardest thing in the World to die well? That if we defer our Preparation for a Death bed, we put it off to a time that is too uncertain for so great a Work? The Work is long, the Time is short, and very improper for a Business so extreamly nice and delicate; so that he who waits for this time, stays till he is a dying to prepare himself for Death. We must therefore (as that Holy Man) prepare our selves betimes; we should begin this Moment, lest we delay any longer we begin too late; at least the time we shall have then prove, almost certainly it will, altogether unfit to prepare to die in.

If a good Death consisted only in receiving the last Sacraments, in kissing a Crucifix, or shedding a few Tears, our Imprudence would be more tolerable, but how many with all imaginable Helps have dy'd miserably, because they never prepar'd for Death?

He who dies well, dies in the State of Grace; he dies truly penitent; which he cannot do, unless he hates Sin above all Things in the World; will it be easie for a Man, who has lov'd and doated on Sin all his Life, and stays till Death tears him by force from the Occasions of it, will it be easie for such a Man efficaciously to resolve against it? Will it be an easie thing for him to make sincere Acts of Contrition, of Faith, Hope and Charity, who was never us'd to them? When he is oppress'd with Pain and Sicknes, his Soul troubled and disorder'd at the Approach of Death, will it be an easie thing for him to regulate his Family and his Conscience too at such a time? To make a general Confession, which requires so much Leisure, and thereby repair all the Faults of his past Confessions: Is such a Man, who scarce knows what he does, in a Condition to dispatch in Two or Three Hours the most difficult Work in the World, which requires very much Time, a perfect Tranquility of Mind, and the greatest Application?

If we imagine it easie to die well, and with so little Preparation, we must condemn the Saints who took so much Pains, who spent their whole Lives in Preparation, and yet after all were not free from a saving Fear at their last Hour. Nay, we must condemn our selves for acknowledging that they were truly wise in what they did. We own that we cannot be too well prepar'd for Death: O why then do we make so little Preparation for it?

Our Redeemer foresaw our Carelesness in this Matter, and therefore he has exhorted us more to this Preparation than to any thing else. *Watch* (says he) *for you know not the Hour wherein your Lord will come; watch, because you know neither the Day, nor the Hour*, Mat. 24. 42. Mar. 13. 35. Luk. 12. 35. *Be always ready*, and upon your Guard. And to let us see more clearly that this Preparation is a sure way to die well, he adds, Blessed is that Servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find watching, ready to run and open the Door as soon as he knocks. This Preparation is necessary for all those who desire a happy Death; and it seems that God, the Sovereign Dispenser of all Grace, has annex'd the Grace of dying well to the Care we take in preparing for it.

This we learn by the Parable of the Virgins; the Virgins, who had been careful in feeding their Lamps, and had prepar'd them-

themselves beforehand to meet the Bridegroom, went in with him to the Wedding, from whence the foolish Virgins were excluded because of their Negligence, and Want of Preparation.

This Truth, that we have Need of Preparation to die well, is universally acknowledged; 'Tis for this Reason that we are so afraid of suddain Death; but what does this Fear produce? Has it awaken'd and excited us to prepare for Death? Or do we wait for our last Sickness? That is, staying for Death to prepare to die.

The Wise Men of the World are not so negligent in their Temporal Concerns; do we our selves act in the same manner? Do we undertake any thing of Importance, wherein our Interest, our Honour, or our Pleasure, is concerned, without taking our Measures beforehand? We will not venture to speak in publick, or to shew our Capacity, till we have taken Time to prepare our selves for it; and with what Care and Diligence do we improve that Time? If we are to shew our Skill in any Exercise we always take some Time for Practice: What Pains did they take (saith *St Paul*) who strove for Victory in the Publick Games? How carefully did they study all the Slights necessary for their Design? How did they foresee the Artifices their Adversary might make use of to surprize them? How did they avoid Pleasure, lest it should

enervate

conserve them? How temperate were they in their Diet? How great was their Charity for many Years together? And shall we who know that our Salvation, that our Eternal Happiness, depends on the manner of our dying, be less solicitous to learn to do it well? We are then to engage in a terrible Fight, dare we venture before we have learn'd to make use of our Weapons, and how to avoid being overcome? How can we hope for a happy Death if we do not learn to die well, if we do not so much as know what we are to learn?

How long shall we rely on our Health and Youth, and on the Facility of being assisted on our Death-beds? Do we know any thing more certainly than the Uncertainty of that last Hour? Who would venture his Estate upon the Hopes of a long Life? We may die every Moment; this, for ought we know, may be the last Day we have to live; we see Men die every Hour, and yet we defer to prepare for Death, still we put off to another Time: Good God! What Time do we mean?

The Time of Sicknes is no Time of Preparation; we should be ready then. *Be ready,* says our Saviour; he does not say, *Prepare your selves,* but *be ready.* Now common Sense will tell us that we must prepare before we can be ready.

What should we think of a Captain of a ship who never enquires whether his An-

chors and Cables be in a Readiness, and fit for Service, till he is just perishing in a violent Storm? What should we think of a Governour who neglects to repair the Breaches of his Town, and lets the Magazines remain empty till he is close Besieg'd, and the Trenches open'd? Death (says the Wise Man) is a dangerous Voyage; we sail from Time to Eternity among Rocks and Tempests. It is a sudden Siege, where our Enemy has shut us up in a Moment; and can we think this a fit time to prepare our selves to fight.

We are afraid that the Thoughts of Death will disturb our Joy and make us sad; we deceive our selves, the Thoughts of Death disquiet only those who are unprepared and unwilling to think of it. After all our Endeavours we shall never attain a solid Happiness in this Life by any other Means than those which conduce to a happy Death. He who has learn'd to die well, (says a very holy Man) has learn'd not only to live well, but to be happy; for the Thoughts of Death are uneasy only to those who have cause to fear they shall die ill; 'tis the truest Subject of Joy and Consolation to him that knows how to die well; he who is always ready to die cannot be afraid to think of dying.

I could not avoid insisting on the Necessity and Manner of preparing for Death because the chief Design of this Retreat ought

ought to be to excite a Christian to prepare to die happily by living holily.

No Practice of Devotion is more universally necessary than this; every Body cannot Fast; Solitude and Austerities are not equally proper to all sorts of Men; but every Age, Rank and Condition is able to prepare for Death: Nothing can be a reasonable Hinderance. Let us then examine how we have been hitherto prepared? Whether we do now prepare? And seeing we are now convinc'd of the Necessity of doing it, how will our Souls be rack'd with Despair when we come to die if we neglect it?

S E C T. II.

Of the Manner how we must prepare to die well.

THE most general and most necessary Preparation is a holy Life; when we begin that, we ought to begin to prepare for Death, the whole Life of a Christian being indeed a Preparation to die well.

We are afraid to die suddenly, but what Good will that Fear do us if we put ourselves under a kind of Necessity to die ill? For how can a Man die otherwise who will not prepare till he is just going to expire?

And

And indeed what probability is there that a Man who has liv'd ill should die well? That he should be able in Two or Three Days to make Reparation for the Wickedness of a long Life; when the greatest Saints, after a perfect Life of many Years, have not yet been out of Danger of dying ill. But we hope we shall have Time; what Time? A Time that is no Time for us; a Time of which we can make no use; a Time when the Time of Mercy is past.

But we trust in the Grace of God, and thus we hazard all, by supposing our selves sure of Grace, which God, without any Injustice, might have refus'd to the most perfect Saints; and the Son of God hath protested that they who defer their Conversion to the last, *shall die in their Sins*. And the Holy Ghost hath declar'd by the Pen of the Wise Man, that when Death seizes you, which you put so far from you now, *when Distress and Anguish which you did not apprehend come upon you of a sudden, than he will laugh at the Sinner, he will mock at his Misery; when he cries for Mercy he will not answer, and will have no Regard to his Prayer.*

'Tis true, we seldom see any die ill who have liv'd well; but 'tis much more rare to see any die well who have liv'd ill.

2. A more particular Manner of Preparation, and which is most suitable for this Day of Retreat, is to do all the Exercises of the Day, as if it were the last Day of your Life.

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endeavouring to put your self into such a Disposition as you would desire to be in at the Hour of Death.

To that end consider seriously at the Close of each Meditation, what your Thoughts on that Subject would be if you were just going to give up an Account to God of your whole Life. And particularly examine what it is that would most trouble you if you were now a dying.

Three things usually disturb dying Men.

1. Their Neglect of the Duties of their Station. 2. Their frequenting the Sacra-

ments without Profit. 3. Their Abuse of

the Means of Perfection which they have

enjoy'd, and their having render'd useless

the Inspirations and Graces which they have

receiv'd. We should examine strictly this

day, (especially during the Meditation on

Death) whether we have nothing to re-

proach our selves on these Heads? How

have hitherto discharg'd the Duties of

our Calling? Whether we are punctual

and careful now? If we are engag'd in

the World, do we live in it like Chri-

tians, according to our Saviour's Ma-

ndates? If we have the Happiness to be Re-

ligious, are we exact in keeping our Vows,

and observing our Rule? If we have the

Honour to be Priests, do our Lives an-

swer the Holiness of our Character? In

whatever Station we are, have we done

our Duty in it? Are we satisfy'd with our

Condition? And should we not to be for-

ry

ry if we were going to die that we have made no greater Progress in the Way of Perfection?

Do not our frequent Confessions, without any Amendment, and our reiterated, unprofitable Communion fly in our Faces? *Jesus Christ* hath fed us with his precious Body and Blood, do we grow stronger by that Divine Food? What should we answer to that impartial Judge if we were now before him commanded to give an Account of his Blood? Do we say or hear Mass with that Piety and Devotion as becomes a Sacrifice, which is the holiest Act of our Religion? Would a Priest find Comfort if he were now to die in the Remembrance of the Sentiments with which he hath so often celebrated? And could he rejoice before God in having frequently offer'd that adorable Sacrifice?

Have we not made an ill Use of those precious Graces which our Redeemer purchased for us with his Blood? How many Inspirations have we neglected? How many good Desires have we stifled? We must give an exact Account of all the Favours; Are we ready to do it if we were to die this Moment? Are we able to shew that we have improv'd our Talents? We know it is not enough to keep them, can we shew that we have augmented them?

These should be the Heads of our Examination at the End of the Meditation

Death

Death; we should make our Confession as if it were our last, and endeavour to repair whatever we have Reason to fear has been amiss in our former. We should do well to make some Reflections on the State of our Affairs, and order them so that they may not disturb us when we come to die. In short, we must endeavour to spend the Day in such a State as we would desire to be in the last Moment, and we must close up all with a Sacrifice of our selves, our Possessions, our Healths, and our Lives, to Christ, begging him to dispose absolutely of them for the Advancement of his Glory, and submitting our selves entirely and freely to Death whenever he pleases. We must then devote our selves wholly to the Blessed Virgin, and beseech her to stand by us in this difficult time; we must address some Prayers to St. Joseph, to our Guardian Angels, who are able to give us very powerful Succours, and sum up all our Desires, with begging the Grace of Perseverance in some particular Prayer as we judge most proper.

3. A third Method is to set one Day apart every Year to prepare for Death; we consecrate it intirely to that Work, and do that Day what we must do when we come to die, what we shall then wish we had done, and what we shall not be able to do upon a Death-Bed.

The Evening before we must put our Affairs in such Order that we may meet with no Interruption next Day: For the Work of the Day requires an absolute Retreat, and a perfect Tranquility of Mind: If we have Conveniency we should begin with visiting the Holy Sacrament, beseeching our Redeemer, by the Merits of his Death, to give us Grace to dispose ourselves to die well. Then we should address our selves in a particular Manner to the *Blessed Virgin*, whose Protection is so necessary in that last Hour, to *St. Michael*, our *Good Angels*, *St. Joseph*, and the *Saint*, whose Name we bear; we should do well to say the *Vespers for the Dead* and so close our Preparation for the next Day with half an Hour of Meditation on the Improvement of Time, the Means and Graces which God hath bestowed on us to work out our Salvation, and the little Pains we have taken for it.

The *Parable* in the 16th of *S. Luke* is proper to be the Subject of the Meditation, where the *Rich Man*, who was dissatisfy'd with his *Steward*, requires him to give an Account of his Conduct since he took the Charge of his Affairs; or else we may chuse the other *Parable* of the *barren Fig-tree*, *Luk. 13. 16.* which is already propos'd for the Evening before the Retreat.

We are to spend the rest of the Evening in Solitude, retir'd from the Noise and Distraction of the World, wholly employ'd in taking care

A general Confession of our whole Lives,
of one, or so many Years as our Director
thinks fit. And we must omit nothing
that may serve to put our Souls into so
good a State, that we may have nothing
to reproach our selves, no Scruples concern-
ing our past Life; that we may be able to
look on the next Day as the last of our
lives, and to employ it as we would the
last.

Let us begin the Day with blessing God,
who hath been pleas'd to give us yet longer
time, and to inspire us with the Design of
preparing for Death: And Prostrate before
the Crucifix let us offer up our Selves, our
Health, our Goods, our Lives, an absolute
sacrifice to God: Submitting our selves
heartily to whatever kind of Death he
thinks fit to send, and accepting it in Satis-
faction for our Sins, and in Union with the
Death of Jesus Christ.

Then let us Meditate an Hour on Death,
on what we shall suffer, feel, and think then:
let us endeavour to become sensible that it
is not far off, and to put on such Dispositi-
ons as we shall have at its Approach.

Let us reflect seriously on the Rigour of
Death, how without any Exception it de-
prives us of all things; on the Condition of
our Bodies in the Grave, and how soon we
shall be forgotten in the World; how lit-
tle our Relations, our Friends and Acquain-
tance, will think of us, as if we had never
liv'd.

liv'd. Let us affect our selves with the Vanity of all that Charms us here, with the Folly of placing our Happiness, or our Hopes on the Creatures: Riches, Honours, Pleasures, all vanish, and are as nothing at the Sight of Death; but above all, let us press home the Importance of dying Well the Danger of dying Ill, if we do not prepare for it betimes; and that it will be to little Purpose for us to put off our Preparation to a Death-Bed.

This Meditation should produce sincere Resolutions that we will immediately begin to do what, when Death comes, we shall wish we had done sooner, and what we shall not be able to do if we defer it till then. And because External Objects very much contribute to render us more reflected, we may follow their Examples who make their Chambers as obscure as they can, who have the Representation of Death before them, leaving only just Light enough to discern it. Others suppose themselves ready to expire, and with a Crucifix in their Hands seek all their Consolation from that amiable Object. Others hang the Chamber with Mourning, and endeavour by the Sight of their Winding-Sheets, to represent Death approaching. These Funeral Objects have a certain mournful Air which is capable of making a great Impression.

Our Confession must be such as we would make if we were dying; we must omit nothing, we must Disguise nothing, that may give us any Trouble; we must lay our Souls entirely open, that our Confessour may be as well acquainted with our interiour as we are our selves. We must shew him all that passeth in our Hearts, all that God sees there, and which he will One Day expose to all the World, if we do not prevent that terrible Discovery by a full and entire Confession. Above all, we must be truly contrite, which is the Point wherein we are nearest deficient.

Say to your Soul that you are Working for Eternity; 'tis not a Ceremony you are about; you are now to blot out your past Sins, to do this Work in such a Manner that you may be in no need of doing it again, were you immediately to die.

Examine your self carefully on these Articles, the Restitution of your Neighbour's Goods, the Reparation of his Honour Blasted by your Censures, the Example you have given, the Tepidity and Slothfulness of your Life, your Enmities and Hatreds, your want of Godly Sorrow, of Sincerity, of Resolutions of Amendment in your Confessions, the Sins of your Youth, those which your Interest hath made you commit, the ill Habits in which you have Indulg'd your self, the dangerous Engagements you should not break, the next Occasions of Sin

Sin which you would not avoid, the darling Passion, the beloved Sin, which Men hardly ever Mortifie, and which is the Source of all their Disorders, your inordinate Love of Pleasure, your wilful Ignorance of the Duties of your Station, your Abusive and Scandalous Raleries, the ill Use of the Sacraments, of Time, of Grace: If you be Religious, search into the Violation of your Vows, your Carelessness in discharging the particular Duties of your Calling.

These are the things which do generally disturb us on a Death-Bed, and make our Salvation doubtful; when Restitution or Reparation of Honour, to those we have Aspers'd; when quitting the Occasion of Sin, reconciling our selves to our Enemies, precede our Confession, it is the best Sign that our Sorrow and Resolutions are Sincere.

We should look upon this Day's Communion as the *Viaticum*, and imagine that when the Priest when he puts the Blessed Host into our Mouths say, *Receive dear Brother the precious Body and Blood of Jesus Christ your Saviour to be your Viaticum* in your Passage to Eternity. The Acts following the Communion must be suitable to the Condition of a dying Christian, which we shall not be able to make when we are indeed expiring.

Having regulated our Consciences, let us then put our Temporal Affairs in order

if we were going to die. *Make your Will* (with *St. Augustine*) while you are yet in health, while you have your Senses free, while you are Master of your Time, and of your self. At your last Sickness (continues the same Father) you will be exposed to so many Flatteries, Importunities, and Surprizes, that it will not be your Will, but the Will of those about you. Besides, your Time will then be too precious, and too short, to spend any of it in worldly Matters: But you must be careful not to forget your self while you provide for others; you forget your self if you give nothing to the Poor.

Let the Remainder of the Day be employ'd in good Works, in a profound Solitude and Recollection, and in reading some spiritual Book that Treats of Death. Father *Colombeire's Three Discourses* on that subject are Admirable, and may be very useful if we Peruse them Carefully: Or else you may Read the foregoing Meditation and the Sentiments which we shall have at the Hour of Death.

Let us pass one Hour in Consideration of the Duties of our private Station, especially on those Particulars which may trouble you on a Death-Bed; and we may Reap great benefit by being attentive to the Prayers of the Church for dying Persons, either in the administration of the Sacrament of Extream unction, or in the Recommendation of the soul to God.

It is evident that we ought to debar ourselves all manner of Conversation during the whole Day; we must speak only to our Director, unless we Visit some poor Sick or Dying Person, not only to comfort and assist them, but also to raise in our self a more lively Image of what we shall be on the Day.

We must close the Day with a Meditation on Judgment; on the different Conditions of a Fervent and a Lukewarm Soul going to appear before God.

The chief Fruits of this Christian Practice are these; we must be perfectly Wean'd from every thing of which we know Death will deprive us; to which we must add an exciting Horrour of all mortal Sin, Reformation of our Lives, and a sincere Desire to lay up a Treasure of Merits by the Practice of Virtue and good Works.

S E C T. III.

*Prayers and Ejaculations to help
to die Well.*

THE Time of our last Sickness is the most precious Season of our Life wherein it concerns us most to improve every Moment, and which we are least capable of improving. Both our Bodies

nds languish on a sick Bed, and what we is out of Custom. We are not able to ke long Prayers nor affectionate Meditations, but we may and must make frequent of Resignation, Love, Contrition, and confidence in God; and how shall we it if we never Practis'd them? To do m well we must have us'd our selves to duce them: This Consideration has in- d me to set down some short Prayers fervent Ejaculations, taken for the most t out of Scriptures, or the Holy Fathers: ey are proper to assist us in dying Well, may be very useful to a Christian du- g his Sickness, if he were acquainted with Practice of them before.

Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick, Joan.

3.

I am Sick, O my God, I come to thee, only Physician; I am Miserable, and therefore I fly to thee, who art the Source of Mercy; I am Dying, and therefore I have recourse to thee, who art Life it self. Yes, dear Saviour, thou art my Physician, thou the Fountain of Mercy, thou art the Life my Soul, pity my Infirmities. Aug. Ser- mon. c. 2.

Help, O Lord, my Strength faileth me; my Soul is overwhelmed with Trouble, and all my bones are broken with Grief. Psal. 6.
O Lord, Rebuke me not in thy Wrath, nei- Chastise me in thy Anger; be mindful, Lord, of thy tender Mercies, and pity me.

37

I am quite cast down, I suffer exceedingly; but this is my Comfort, that thou, my God, wilt not forget me in the midst of my Misery; can a Mother forget her Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? Yes, she may forget, but I have thy Promise that thou wilt not forget me. Isa. 49. 15.

Thou knowest; O my God, what I suffer! Oh! Do thou give me Patience that I may be able to go to thee by the Way of the Cross. *Aug. Med. cap. 37.*

My Sufferings are great, but not great enough, I deserve much severer Chastisements; give more Crosses, but at the same time give me more Patience; shew thy Mercy, O Lord, unto thy Servant; direct me the Way that I may at length arrive at my Father's House. *St. Aug.*

My God! If I had a Thousand Lives I would devote them all to thee; Oh! That the Life which thou hast given me were more precious and worthy thy Acceptance: But such as it is, I give it thee without any Repugnance; since thou requirest it I would not keep it, though it were in my Power.

Yes, my God, I am ready and willing to be depriv'd of every thing I lov'd upon the Earth, and to lay down this Body, which I have loved too well.

I accept willingly the hideous State to which I shall be soon reduc'd, when I become Meat for the Worms, and am turn'd into Rot and Rottenness. Oh! How happy should I be if this Destruction of my Body could repair the Injuries

have offered to the Divine Majesty, by preferring my Body to him, and its Satisfaction to his Service?

Notwithstanding all my Pains, I am ready to suffer greater, if it be thy Will, O God; my most acute Torments are too slight and short, being they are the last Proof I shall ever give thee of my Love, and of my earnest desire to please thee.

Tho' thou should'st Condemn me to all the Pains of the next Life, tho' they should be never so violent, and should endure to the End of the World, yet I would submit to them. Glorifie thy self, O Lord, in punishing me, since I would not Honour thee, nor to thy Will.

I believe, O Lord, all that thou hast revealed to thy Church, and I firmly Hope for those glorious things which thou discoverest to thy Elect in Heaven.

I acknowledge, O my God, the Enormity of my Sins; I have committed more than I am able to remember; my Soul is grieved that I have served so good a Master so ill. But my Sins cannot lessen my Confidence in thy Mercies, which are infinitely greater than them all.

I trust that notwithstanding all my Guilt thou wilt not suffer me to be for ever Miserable, for thou art infinitely Good. I am not afraid of Hell, tho' I have deserv'd it, because my Saviour hath purchas'd Heaven for me. I hope in thy Mercy, O Lord, and all the Devils in Hell shall never make me Relinquish that

F

Hope.

Hope. In spite of them I will Sing eternal Praises to thee, will adore thy Mercy, and possess and love thee for ever.

O Divine Mother, most Holy Virgin, receive your unworthy Child, who is now Struggling and Striving with Eternity, and Succour him in this Hour of Danger. Just. Lips.

Oh! Holy Mary, Mother of Grace and Mercy, defend me from the Assaults of the Enemy; Assist and Help me now, and in my last Hour, and receive my Soul into thy Arms.

Have Mercy, O Lord, on this wretched Sinner; thou who hast so often forgiven renewed Offences, make him Partaker of thy Mercy, now he repents of them. Bern.

I have sinn'd, O God, I confess my Iniquities; they are more Numerous than the Sand of the Sea-shore, but thy Mercies are never to be Numbred. In orat. Manass.

I repent, O Lord my God, of all my Sins; my Soul is torn with Grief, because I have displeas'd thee; and that which grieves me yet more is, that I do not grieve enough. S. Aug.

My God, I curse the Day that I neglected to love thee, I curse the Day wherein I Offended thee.

The Lord is my Light, and my Salvation whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Protector of my Life, of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 26.

Though Men should Encamp against me, my Heart will not be terrified; though I walk in the midst of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil because thou art with me.

Thou

A Spiritual Retreat.

99

Though thou slay me, yet I will trust in thee.

Job 11. 15.

*Mercy shall compass him about that hopeth
in the Lord, Psal. 13.*

*Lord, increase my Faith, increase my Hope,
increase my Love, Psal. 36.*

*My Heart is ready, O God, my Heart is
ready, Psal. 36.*

*Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's,
Rom. 14.*

*It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good
in his Sight, 1 Reg.*

*We have received Good at the Hand
of the Lord, and shall we not also receive
Evil, Job.*

*We suffer justly, O Lord, because we have
sinned against thee, Jer. 14. 25.*

February and August.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Of the Importance of Salvation.

FIRST POINT. *The Business of our Salvation is the most Important of all Business.*

SECOND POINT. *The Business of our Salvation is our only Business.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that no Business is of so great Importance to us as the Business of our Salvation; an Eternity of Happiness or misery depends on the Success of this. All other Affairs are only permitted as they are Subservient to this great Work: If we lose this, we lose all; for we lose God, who is all Good, and without whom there can be no Good; if we fail in this he is lost to us and lost for ever, without Recovery.

Salvati

Salvation is our own Business, every thing else is foreign to us; in other things we do the Business of our Children, our Friends, our Family, our Country, or of the Community to which we belong, and not precisely our own Business; every thing else is a Business of Time, this of Eternity.

If we lose other Business, tho' of the highest Importance, we may find a Remedy; or if we do not we shall be no Losers, provided we succeed in this. The Loss of our Souls is the only irreparable Loss, Eternity itself will not be sufficient to deplore it.

Shall we be able to comfort our selves with the Thoughts that we have been successful in all our other Business of no Consequence, and have only neglected this, which is the only Business of Eternity? 'Tis no matter tho' we live Obscurely and Forgotten, without Friends or Support, and die Poor, provided we secure our Salvation. But what will all our Riches and Power, all our Knowledge and Wisdom avail us if we lose our Souls? Tho' all the World should conspire together they will never be able to deprive a Man of Heaven, and make him miserable to all Eternity: Neither will they be able to make one damn'd Soul happy, or so much as mitigate his Torments. *What will it profit a Man to gain the whole World, and lose his Soul? Or what can he give in Exchange for his Soul?*

Is it possible that this Business of Eternity is the only Business of Consequence we have to do, and that yet we should neglect this most, and lay it least to Heart?

We fancy that our Studies, our Trade, our Diversions, our Visits and Conversation, are of great Importance to us, they take up all our Time, we can never find Leisure enough for them, we are unwilling to defer them; but when we should think seriously of our Souls, we make no Difficulty of deferring; we imagine it is too soon, and that we shall have time enough, and yet (which is still more surprizing) we are never at leisure to set about it.

Certainly we must have odd Notions of Eternal Happiness, since we are so careless of securing it; would we be content to take no more Pains, and spend no more time in our Studies and in Temporal Affairs, than we do in what concerns our Eternal Salvation.

If our Salvation depended on another, could he have so little Zeal or Charity as to neglect it more than we do our selves? Tho' we know it depends wholly on our own Care. What Pains does every Man take in his Calling? If we have a Child to provide for, if we have a Design to join in Partnership with a Merchant, how careful are we to inform our selves, to examine, to advise with our Friends? What Measures do we not observe? What Precautions do we not take? We think we can never be too sure.

But

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But when we are to spend a little time for Salvation, we think a very little too much.

Salvation is the Business of Eternity, but it must be done in time ; and we have need of all our Time for it ; God gives us our whole Life to think of it ; he judged it was all little enough, but we imagine it may be done in less.

If we spend in working out our Salvation the hundredth Part of the Time and Pains we throw away in Worldly Business, we should soon be Great Saints. This is the only necessary Business we can have, and yet we hardly allot a little Time for it, nay, we grudge it even that little.

By our Proceedings one would think that we believe God our Debtor, and oblig'd to us for being saved.

If a Man of Business or Letters pass One whole Day in acquitting himself of the Duties of a Christian, he looks upon that Day as lost ; but we spend whole Months in vain Studies, or in Worldly Business, and call this spending the Time well.

Salvation is our great and chief Business ; now a Man's chief Business takes up all his Thoughts, and hardly gives him time to think of any other ; and if this succeeds he comforts himself for the Miscarriage of the rest.

We commonly put off the Care of our Salvation to our last Sickness ; that is, we

put off the Business of Eternity, the most important Business we have, and which requires all our Lives, to a Time when we are incapable of following the slightest Business in the World, when we are indeed incapable of any thing.

Is God mistaken, who tells us, this only is of Consequence? Is he deceiv'd in the Disposition of his Providence, and in all his Care, which tends only to this? Is he, in whom are all good things, and who is all himself, so little to be valued, that we can be indifferent whether we lose him or no? Whence is all that Weeping, that cruel Despair of the damn'd Souls, if what they have lost be not worth our seeking? If everlasting Misery be so slight a Business, why do we tremble at the Thoughts of Eternity? and if we believe it so terrible, how can we be at rest while we are so careless about it, and in so much Danger?

My God! How many Days of Grace have I abus'd? How many precious Hours have I let pass unprofitably? Wretch that I am, to spend so much Time in doing nothing: But how much more wretched shall I be if I do not now at length begin seriously to work out my Salvation?

What do I stay for? For a proper Time. Alas! That Time perhaps is already past for me. Do I stay till thou callest me? Thou hast never ceas'd to do it. Oh! How long hast thou solicited me to no Purpose? Shall

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this reiterated Grace thou givest me now be
in vain?

How long shall I spend the best Part of
my Life in vain Amusements, which I my
self condemn; and do I condemn them on-
ly to aggravate my Guilt, by losing that
Time in the Pursuit of them which I ought
to employ for Heaven?

How long shall I fancy those things ne-
cessary which are of no use for the next
Life, while I neglect only the Business
of Eternity?

My God, how great will my Despair and
Confusion be upon a Death-bed if I conti-
nue to live as I have done hitherto, when
all the Means and Opportunities I have had
of securing my Salvation, when this present
Opportunity, and the Thoughts I now have
of doing it, present themselves to my Me-
mory?

O my God, since thou hast not yet pu-
nished me, tho' I deserved Punishment, I
trust thou wilt not refuse me the Assistance
of thy Grace, tho' I am unworthy of it.
Since this is the Day design'd for my Con-
version, the present Resolution shall not be
like the rest. I believe, I am fully persuaded,
I am sensible, that there is but One Thing
necessary, that Eternal Salvation is the only
business that concerns me, and I am deter-
min'd to begin this Day to apply my self
seriously to it:

SECOND POINT.

Consider that our Eternal Salvation is not only the greatest, but the only Business we have, to which we ought to apply our selves entirely lest we should do it ill. Whatever else we call great Business is not properly Business, at least not ours; they concern others more than us, and we labour more for our Posterity than for our selves.

We may get others to do them for us, and we may let them alone, without being everlastingly unhappy, but we must work out our salvation our selves, and we are lost without Recovery if we neglect it. This is that One Thing of which our Saviour speaks so often; this is our only Business: Only, because this alone is of such mighty Consequence, the Success whereof depends on us; only, because no other deserves all our Care; only, because it requires all our Care, (and because we may do it if we will.)

'Tis equally the only Business of all the World, of the King in the Government of his Kingdom, of the Prelate in the Administration of his Diocess, of the L^rned in their Studies, of the Soldier in the War, of the Merchant in his Trade, of the Artisan in his Calling. 'Tis not necessary for a Man to be a King, a Prelate, a Soldier, a Merchant, or a Tradesman, a Scholar, or a Man of Business, but 'tis absolutely necessary for him to be sav'd.

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107

In other Matters we have always some Recourse in this Life, or in the next, but there is none in this; he who has done this, has done nothing, and will never be in a Condition to do it again: He who is damn'd, is damn'd for ever.

What Reception would an Ambassadour deserve from his Master, who at his Return from his Embassy should give an Account of the great Things he had done during his Absence, of the Friends he had made, the Reputation he had gain'd, the Riches he had acquir'd, and how well he had diverted himself; in fine, that he had done every thing but the Business he was sent to do?

God hath sent us into the World only to work out our Salvation; this was his sole Design in creating us, this is his sole Design in preserving us; will he be satisfy'd with our telling him when we come to die, Lord, we have done great things, we have been in great Repute in the World, we have got large Estates, we have been instrumental in the Salvation of our Neighbours, we have neglected nothing but our own Salvation, we have done every thing but that One Thing for which Thou hast sent us into the World? And yet this is all the Account the greatest Part of Mankind is able to give, because 'tis at this Rate the greatest Part of Mankind live. And if we were now to appear before God could we give any other Account?

Is all this true? Is there such an Eternity? Is Life given us only to prepare for it? If I lose my Soul, can I ever recover it? And shall I certainly lose it if I live as the greatest Part of the World do, and as I have done hitherto? Shall I wish at my last Hour that I had liv'd otherwise? That I had done what I could, and what I ought to have done? And will all those Things that take me up now, seem vain and trifling then?

My God! Do we indeed believe this our great Business? The Devils and the Damned have as good or stronger speculative Belief than we, but do we reduce our Faith to Practice, which is the Science of the Saints?

Is it possible that other Mens Business should take me up, that worldly Things, Recreations and Compliments, should have all our Time, while the Business of our Salvation is the least minded, as if it did not concern us?

What are we the better for being endued with Reason, if we make no use of it in the Business of our Salvation, for which alone God bestow'd it on us? Alas! we in this manner wear it out in prosecuting trivial Designs, we are proud of it in Matters of no Moment, we value our selves upon our prudential Conduct, and wise Counsels in Business; but we neglect the real use of it, and we act the Matters of Eternity as if we wanted common-Sense.

And (which is yet more surprizing) we are all agreed in the Importance of Salvation, and in the Vanity of every thing else; yet we apply our selves only to seek those Vanities, and are negligent in nothing but the Business of Salvation.

We are all conceited of our Wisdom and Capacity in Business; every Man pretends to understand it; we think Ignorance in Business, or Neglect of it, shows Want of Sense and Breeding, and that our Reputation depends upon it; but if we neglect nothing but our Salvation, if we live as unconcerned as if we had no Soul to lose, we are so far from blushing or hiding our Carelessness, that we glory in it; and tho' we are never so devout and Irregular, we pass for very honest Men; and if we understand the World, and know how to be successful in it, we are accounted wise.

'Tis an affront to tell a Man that he does not understand his Business; but 'tis no Disgrace to be accus'd of Negligence in the Business of Salvation; surely we do not look upon it as our Business: My God! When did this one thing necessary cease to be so?

We can lose our Souls with all the Tranquility in the World, and we are reasonable Creatures in every thing that does not concern us; we do not deny that the Saints were truly wise, yet all their Wisdom consisted in preferring their Salvation to every thing else, in esteeming it their only Business.

Are/

Are we wiser than they, that our Actions are so contrary to theirs? They spent their whole Lives in preparing for Eternity; to what End did they take so much Pains, and spend so much Time, for what we pretend to do with so much Ease? Miserable, Unthinking, Wretches that we are, to allow so little Time for what requires it all.

Have we found a new Way to Heaven, whereof the Son of God was ignorant? Or is the Price of Heaven fallen? And is that Happiness, which cost the Blood of Christ to purchase, become of less Value?

What are now the Sentiments of those Famous Statesmen whom we esteem the greatest Politicians? Of those Extraordinary Men who were always busie in pacifying or troubling the World, which their Heads were always full of. Those Men of Riches, as the Scripture calls them, who lived without thinking on Eternity, and who after an uninterrupted Success in all their other Business, have miscarry'd only in this great Business of Salvation? They are not damn'd for Laziness and Sloth; on the contrary, they owe their Ruin to too much useless Business; they were so busie that their very Sleeps were broken by their Cares, and they have lost themselves by labouring in what did not concern them, by taking too much Pains about nothing, while they neglected their

for February and August. III

their only real Business; and 'tis by this that the greatest Part of Mankind are lost.

And shall not I increase the Number of the lost if I continue to live as I have done? What have I done for Heaven? What have I not done to deprive my self of it? I have been careful of every thing but my soul, and I act as if its Ruin were nothing to me. But I trust in thy Mercy, O my God, that the Change of my Life shall manifest that my Heart is chang'd; I will give my Soul; the Care of my Salvation requires all my Diligence, and it shall have it all; I humbly beseech thee to give me thy Grace to recover what I have lost, as thou hast given me Time for it; I am sensible that this is my only Business; I am resolv'd to do it, let thy Grace make me successful.

SECOND

SECOND MEDITATION.

*Of the Motives which we have to apply
ourselves continually to the Business
of our Salvation.*

FIRST POINT. *The Motives which
are common to all Christians.*

SECOND POINT. *The Motives
which every one hath in particular.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider what God has done for our Salvation; he is earnest and desirous to render us happy, as if his own Happiness had depended on ours. Having made us free, and Masters of our selves, what Pains hath he taken, what Pains doth he still take to gain our Hearts? He desires our Hearts; he solicites us to give them, he is importunate with us for them; sometimes he promises, sometimes he threatens; he leaves nothing undone to persuade us to love him.

for February and August. 113

takes all this Pains because he knows
is in our Power to save or damn our
selves, and he earnestly desires our Salva-

Did we ever duely consider, are we able
comprehend, the Mystery of our Redemp-
tion? Where the Almighty exerts all his Om-
nipotence, to shew the Greatness of his Love
our Souls, and with what Earnestness he
sires our Salvation: Could we ever have
imagin'd that God should become Man, to
end that Men might be saved? Yet
is he hath done; and not content with
this wondrous Miracle, he goes yet farther to
engage us to love him; he passes a Life of
three and thirty Years in Poverty and Suf-
ferings, and he subjects himself to a cruel
Death. Such a Value doth God set upon
our Souls, that nothing less than the Suffer-
ings, the Blood, the Life of this God and
Man could redeem them; and shall we
think it a small Matter to lose them?

Shall we think that we do too much
when God thought nothing too much to
purchase our Happiness? Let us rather con-
fide that we can never do enough. What
does he get by our Salvation? Yet what
could he do more than he hath done? Is
not all the Profit ours? Why then do we
do so little for it?

How many are now raging and despair-
ing for having neglected to do what I may
do if I will? And which, if I neglect now,
shall one Day feel the same Regret as they.

Can

Can we have a more powerful Motive to excite us to set about it without Delay and to pursue it continually?

Blessed be God we may yet work on our Salvation; we have yet Time; God offers us his Grace; these very Thoughts proceed from that Grace; but this may perhaps be the last Moment wherein it will be offer'd us. Our Eternal Happiness, for ought we know, our Predestination, may depend on this one important Moment. I am certain that I may make my Salvation sure at present, if I turn sincerely and heartily to God; I have at least great Reason to doubt that if I let slip this Opportunity, I shall never have another; and can I wilfully defer one Moment?

Shall the Devil take more Pains to destroy our Souls than we will take to preserve them? Shall he value our Souls at an higher Rate than we do our selves? This Comparison is shameful, but too true; though his Nature be much nobler than ours, and his Pride so great, yet he stoops to any thing that can ruin a Soul: He never gives over, the greatest Resistance never wears him, or renders him less diligent in assailing us; he cunningly makes use of every little Occasion to destroy us. Good God! Must we learn of him how to prize our Souls? And do we stand in need of his Example to excite us seriously to work on our Salvation?

for February and August. 115

Is not all that thou hast done sufficient?
Must we search for new Arguments to
convince us of the Worth of a Soul for
which thou hast paid so great a Price?
Thou hast Redeemed me, O Divine Sa-
vour; I am thine by a double Title, and
I resolv'd that nothing in the World
shall hinder my giving my self wholly to
Thee without Reserve.

SECOND POINT.

Consider how much God's peculiar Care
for us obliges us to concur with him to se-
cure our Salvation; shall God himself act
for us as if he had nothing else to do, as
if he could not be happy without us? And
shall we stand in need of a more power-
ful Motive to excite us to Diligence?
How does his infinite Wisdom improve
every Moment from our Births to make us
love him? How admirable is the Con-
fidence of his Providence in bringing about
our Salvation? Do we count it a small
Grace that we are Born of Christian Pa-
rents, when so many are Born of Infidels.
That a small Grace to be educated in the
bosom of the Church, out of which per-
haps we should have still continued if we
had been bred in Errour. How great a
Mercy was it to have a good Instructor
in my Youth, a Companion who set me
a good Example, a good Friend to advise
me? We look on these things as common
Accidents.

Accidents, but we shall one Day see that the Hand of Providence dispos'd them all; we afflict our selves for the Loss of a Friend, for the Death of a Relation; we are quite dejected with Poverty, our Want of Capacity disturbs us; and we are troubled to find our selves so little consider'd in the World, while perhaps these very things are the Cause of our Conversion; and we shall one Day find that we owe our Salvation to these seeming Misfortunes.

Most Men have been in some Danger or Sick, and perhaps to Extremity; God who saw we should certainly be lost if we died then, being desirous to save us hath given us more time: We have read some pious Discourse only to pass away the Time, and have found our Hearts touch'd by it; how many happy Occasions have we met with, which tho' wholly unforeseen, were very proper to promote God's Designs in our Conversion? One Inspiration, one sudden Thought, one Word spoken without Design, is frequently the first Occasion of great Conversions.

If we have the Honour to be Consecrated to the immediate Service of God, let us call to mind all the Circumstances of our Vocation, and we shall find them so many Miracles of Providence; that we should come to such a Place, at such a Time, and in such Company; that when we thought

for February and August. 117

Our selves most Wedded to the World, we
and our selves on a suddain Weaned from
that the numerous Examples of World-
lings did not allure us, nor the Love of our
Friends retain us; that we were not dis-
hearten'd by the Austerities of a Life which
seem'd so terrible, but that we had Reso-
lution enough to surmount all these Ob-
stacles.

Nothing but Grace could inspire this ge-
nerous Resolution to a Person weary of the
World, tir'd out with Crosses, and terrify'd
with the Thoughts of approaching Death;
that in the Heat of Youth, when the World
seems most Charming, when we are most
engaged in the Pursuit of Pleasures, when the
Hopes of a long Life, and the Prospect of
making a great Fortune, suggest other
Thoughts, what is a Miracle if such a Con-
version be not?

But whence proceed these Pious Senti-
ments at a Time when I deserve them so
little? Whence is it that among so many
who would have been better than I, God
hath inspir'd me only with this Thought?
And if others have entertain'd the same sincere
Desires, and have had much greater Merits,
whence is it that they are not chosen? How
comes it that if they were chosen they did
not Persevere? That God, perhaps, hath
offer'd them to fall back that I might take
their Place?

Add

Add to these distinguishing Favours and the Inspirations and powerful Assistance with which he prevents us daily, and if these visible Proofs of his singular Care us do not prevail with us to love and serve him without any Reserve, we must be certainly the most ungrateful Wretches living and deserve the severest and most immediate Vengeance.

These are great Subjects of Meditation which require frequent and serious Reflections; they are the sensible Effects of God's particular Providence, which continually Watches over us. They are the visible Marks of his singular Love, in preferring us to many others; and nothing is so capable of exciting in us a lively Faith, a firm Confidence, an invincible Resolution, and ardent Love to him: And yet perhaps there are some who never thought of it.

My God! How do we employ our Thoughts? How can we neglect these comfortable and important Truths? Surely it would be impossible to delay setting about the great Work of Salvation, if we did seriously reflect on what God hath done, and continues to do, every Day for us.

No wonder the Devil employs all his Cunning to prevent our Meditating on these things; he knows how very proper they are to inspire a sincere Desire of serving God; but we are inexcusable to pass so slightly over them and be so little Affected with these pressing

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atives, to endeavour after Perfection in several Stations.

Let us examine whether we have faithfully curr'd with the Grace of God, and whether we have comply'd with his Designs, in taking so much Care of our Salvation: Let us examine wherein we have been Negligent, and penetrated with this wonderful Goodness of God, who is so desirous to make us Saints, let us defer no longer; let us immediately respond with his Will who seeks our good, and resolve on such Measures as will make our Resolutions effectual. Then we shall reap the Fruit of this Meditation, and this Day's Retreat, if we be careful to pursue our Resolutions, and not suffer them to be, as so many have already been, without Effect.

Third Meditation of the Sentiments we shall have at the Hour of Death. See the Third Meditation for the Months of January and July, Pag. 56.

March

March and September.

FIRST MEDITATION

*Of the small Number of those that
are Saved.*

FIRST POINT.

*Our Faith teacheth us that but few
shall be Saved.*

SECOND POINT.

*Our Reason convinces us that but few
shall be Saved.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that the Number of those who shall be Saved is very small, not only in Comparison of above Two Thirds of Mankind, who live in Infidelity; but even in Comparison of that vast Multitude, who are lost in the true Religion. There are few Doctrines of our Faith more clearly revealed

reveal'd than this; strive to enter in at the Strait Gate, (saith our Saviour) for wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way, that leadeth to Destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; but strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, that leadeth to Life, and few there be that find it.

And in another Place he tells us, That many are called, but few are chosen, even of those that are called; which he repeats in the same Terms on another Occasion: And the Apostle speaking by the Spirit of Christ, compares the Body of Christians to those who run a Race, where many run, but one only gains the Prize; to whom he likens those that are saved. And to let us see that he speaks of Believers, he cites the Example of the *Israelites*; You know, my Brethren, (says he) that our Fathers were all under a Cloud, and all passed through the Red Sea with Moses; that they did all eat the same Spiritual Meat. All these Miracles were wrought only for their safe Passage to the promis'd Land, yet how few of them arriv'd in it? Of eighteen hundred thousand Souls that came out of Egypt, none but *Joshua* and *Caleb* entred into Canaan.

He compares the Elect to those few Olives that are left here and there upon the Trees after the Gathering; and to that small Number of Grapes that remain after the diligent Gleaning of the Vineyard.

Besides these Examples and Comparisons which the Scripture uses to convince us of this terrible Truth, we have the Examples of all the World: There was but one Family preserv'd from the Deluge; of Five Great Cities only Four Persons were saved from Destruction, and we find but one Sick Man cur'd of the Palsy among the Crowd of Paralyticks that flock'd to the Pool of *Bethesda*. This dreadful Truth, which our Lord repeated so often to his Disciples, gave Occasion to that Question, *Lord, are there few that shall be saved?* To which our Saviour waving the Question, lest he should terrifie them, answers, *Strive to enter in at the Strait Gate.*

This is certainly the most awakening and terrible Doctrine of our Religion, and yet how little are we affected with it?

Were I sure that but one of ten thousand should be damn'd, I ought to fear and tremble lest it should be my Case; but alas! among ten thousand perhaps there will hardly be one sav'd, and yet I am unconcern'd and fear nothing. Is not my Security a sufficient Cause to fear? Does it not proceed from the Blindness and Hardness of my Heart? Which renders me insensible of my Danger, and thereby less capable of preventing or avoiding it.

The News of one Ship lost among ten thousand affrights many, every one that has Concerns at Sea apprehends for him-
self

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If; but though we know that the greatest Part of Mankind shall be lost, that very few will arrive at the Port of Eternal Happiness, how little are we solicitous for our selves? And who has told us that we shall arrive there?

If *Jesus Christ* had promis'd Heaven to all Christians as positively as he has declared that his Elect are but few, we could not be more unconcern'd than we are. But does this Security lessen our Danger? And will this Insensibility render us less miserable? Alas! If we had no other, this very Tranquility is a sufficient Cause to make us doubt of our Salvation.

We don't think of it; what is it employs our Thoughts if Eternity does not? Do we believe it? Can we believe it, and not fear it? And how can we fear it without thinking of it?

How can we be unconcern'd at the Sight of so great a Danger? The greatest Saints were always afraid. *S. Paul* himself was never exempt from this saving Fear, yet we are free from it; for it is impossible to fear fully, and not mend our Lives.

We sacrifice our Goods to preserve our Lives from Shipwrack; a Merchant makes no Difficulty to throw his most precious Wares, the Fruits of many Years Labour, overboard to save himself; but we will rather hazard all than part with any thing to secure us from Damnation.

If the Infection be in the City every Body is afraid; with what Earnestness do we seek Preservatives? With what Care do we shun the best Companies, and condemn our selves to Solitude, and all this because we are afraid to die. Are we not afraid of being damn'd? We believe that the greatest Part of the World will be lost, and yet we are unwilling to spare one Day for Retreat, we will do nothing to make sure of Heaven.

Do we rely upon our Vocation, upon the Sanctity of our Condition, upon the Talents God hath given us, or upon the Means of Salvation which he affords us? Alas! Remember *Saul* had a true Vocation to the Kingdom, *Judas* to the Dignity of an Apostle, yet *Saul* was rejected and *Judas* lost, even in *Christ's* Family. *Solomon* the wisest of Men, hath with all his Knowledge left us in doubt of his Salvation, and an infinite Number of Christian Heroes, who were exemplary for their Piety during the greatest Part of their Lives have fallen at last. Their too much Security hath ruin'd them in the End of their Lives, and they are damn'd with all their pretended Merits.

And yet, O my God, can I be without Fear? This Want of saving Fear should make me fear all things; I am certain I am lost if I be not afraid of being lost; and can I fear any thing so much as Eternal Perdition?

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O my dear Saviour, who hast Redeemed me with thy precious Blood, and who art graciously pleas'd to make me sensible of my Danger, suffer me not to be lost for ever. My God, let me not be found among the Reprobates. I confess that I have hitherto walk'd in the broad Way, but behold, O Lord, I will now go into the narrow Way, and will strive with all my might to enter into the strait Gate.

Let others run in Crowds to Hell: were there to be but One sav'd in this Place I am resolv'd to be he, and I depend on thy Grace; I know it is my own Fault if I be not One of thy Elect. I have Abus'd thy former Graces, but I have Ground to hope that this shall be Effectual; for I am resolv'd, let the Number of the Elect be never so small, I will be One of that little Flock whatever it cost me; and I am perswaded it is thy Will as well as mine, since I could not form this Resolution if thou hadst not inspir'd it.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that if our Faith did not teach us this terrible Truth, our own Reason would convince us of it; we need only reflect on what is requir'd of us, and on our Manner of Performing it, and we shall presently Conclude that there will be but few Saved.

If we would be Saved we must live up to the Rules of the Gospel; are there many that observe them? We must profess ourselves openly to be Followers of Christ; is not the greatest Part of Mankind ashamed of that Profession? If we would be Sav'd we must either Actually, or in Affection, renounce the World, and all we have in it, and bear our Saviour's Cross daily.

The Pharisees had all the Appearances of Piety, they were extreamly Mortified, and their Lives were unblameable in the Sight of Men; and yet if our Virtue be not more Solid, and more Perfect than theirs, we shall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

'Tis a great Matter to stifle our Revenge, it is yet greater to forgive Injuries, but this is not sufficient to obtain Salvation; if we would be Saved, we must love even those who Persecute us. It is not enough to abhor all wicked Actions, we must abhor the least ill Thought; we are not only oblig'd not to covet our Neighbour's Goods, we must bestow our own on those who are in Want. True Humility, which is the essential Character of a Christian, will not admit of Ambition or Vanity: Tho' you Labour never so much, if God be not indeed the End of your Labour, you will have no Thanks for your Pains to all Eternity. Be as regular as you please, God is not content with an outward Shew; he requires the Heart, and that you should serve him

him in Spirit and in Truth ; that is, sincerely and uprightly. One mortal Sin effaces in a Moment all the Merits of the longest and best Life ; and One Hundred Thousand Millions of Years in Hell will not be a sufficient Punishment for the Sin of One Moment ?

It is an Article of Faith, that neither the Proud, the Covetous, the Deceiver, the Slanderer, nor the Unchaste, shall ever enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; he that enters there must either have always preserv'd his Innocence, or recover'd it by a sincere Repentance ; and do we find many who offer continual Violence to their Inclination ? Without which we can never come there. Where is that exact Purity ? Where is that continual Penance, that Hatred of Sin, and that ardent Charity, which is the Character of the Elect ? What is become of the Primitive Simplicity ? Does not Interest govern ? And is not Religion it self made subservient to it ? Is not the general Example the Rule of most Mens Actions ? Who look upon it as a Maxim that we must act like Men while we live among Men ; but we must act like Christians if we will be Saved : We must lead a Christian Life in the midst of those who have only the Name.

'Tis likewise certain, that the Work of Salvation is our greatest Business ; that we are sent into the World for this End alone ; that we must employ our whole Lives in it, and

and that after all we cannot be sure of it; yet how few Christians do indeed make this their great and only Business?

We can never be Sav'd without Final Grace; 'tis an Article of our Faith, that we can never merit that Grace; that God might without Injustice refuse it to the most perfect Saints; what Reason then have we to expect it, who are so imperfect and so lukewarm in the Service of God?

These are not Counsels only, they are the Maxims of Jesus Christ; the irrevocable Laws, and indispensable Conditions of Salvation, which is not promis'd to the Knowledge, but to the Observation of them; to so exact an Observation, that the Neglect of any one damns us to Eternity: Let us now call to Mind at what rate Men Live, and then judge whether many can be Saved. Let us examine our selves, and see whether we have any Reason to hope to be of that little Number.

Hear what *S. Chrysostom* says to the great City of *Constantinople*; how many (says he) do you think will be Sav'd out of this vast City? (one of the greatest and most populous in the World) I shall terrifie you by my Answer, and yet I am bound to tell you, that of so many Thousand Inhabitants there will hardly be One Hundred Saved; nay, I doubt even of the Salvation of these.

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And yet this Imperial City was then as well regulated as any of those wherein we live, full of those we call honest Men; its inhabitants were reputed devout, frequented the Sacraments, and liv'd as we generally do: Let this great Saint's Decision, who would never have spoken so positively without an extraordinary Light, give us an idea of the small Number of the Elect.

Is it possible that we can cheat our selves so grossly as not to see that we are running headlong to Damnation? And that if we continue to live at our usual Rate, our Religion obliges us to believe we shall be damn'd.

And certainly we could not believe our Religion true, if after having laid down such strict Rules, it allow'd us to hope to be Sav'd in the Violation of them; this would be to impose upon the World: But blessed be God our Religion condemns most severely such an irregular Conduct; and careless, loose, Christians will not be excus'd because of their great Number.

It is an Article of Faith, that unless we be like our Redeemer we cannot be Saved; to be like him we must conform our Wills to his, we must hate what he hates, and love what he loves: Are there many who resemble this great Pattern? How little do we our selves resemble him? And what will become of us if we continue so unlike him?

Now-a-days Men content themselves with some outward Appearances of Religion, with a Shew of Virtue; every Man makes to himself a false System of Conscience, with which he rests satisfied as to what concerns his Salvation; yet we believe that Hereticks are lost, who have their Systems too, and who are as exact Observers of the External Part of Religion as we and have very often all the Qualities of meet honest Men: What Ground have we for this imaginary Assurance? Have we any new Revelation or particular Gospel? Do we build our Hopes upon the Profession of the true Faith which Hereticks have not? Surely, unless we take Pleasure to deceive our selves, we must own that he who believes little of what he ought to do, is in a much better Condition than the Man who does little or nothing of what he believes.

If believing were sufficient, the Number of the Predestinated would not be small; if we had Liberty to live as we pleas'd, we should make no Difficulty of believing any thing; but Faith without Works is dead, tho' you believe never so well, you can never hope for Salvation if you neglect to practice what you believe. The Devils believe more than we, but their Faith is only speculative; and Woe be to us if ours be no more than speculative.

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Are the sublime Sanctity of our Holy Religion, the admirable Example of the Son of God, the Shedding of his Blood, the Efficacy of the Sacraments, the Communications of his Grace, design'd only to make us keep some Measures, which serve only to encourage us to sin more boldly, by disguising those Faults which are common to us with the Pagans? Were the Saints Men of another Condition than we are? Were they excepted in the universal Redemption of Mankind? Was not the Way to Heaven discover'd in their Time? Did they expect any other Recompence? How comes it that we are so very unlike them? They resolv'd to be Saints, what do we resolve to be? And can we hope to be Saints without following their Example? What Grounds have we to rely on the Mercy of God when we make use of that Mercy to hinder our Conversion? Jesus Christ has expressly condemn'd lukewarm Souls, yet does not this Tepidity reign among Christians?

Am I convinc'd that the Number of the Elect is so small? And shall I do nothing to be of that Number? Yes, my God, were there to be but one Soul saved since it depends on my Will to be that Soul, I am resolv'd to be Sav'd.

I acknowledge that I have done nothing for thy Service which can make me hope, but my Confidence is founded on what thou art doing now for me.

Thy

Thy Design in giving me this Opportunity, and in exciting me to this Resolution, was not to increale my Guilt: I have no Need of any other Argument to convince me that thou desirest my Salvation, than this very Fear which thou hast imprinted in my Soul, lest I should not be of the Number of thy Chosen.

I have often rendred my best Thoughts useless, but, my God, I have Reason to hope that this Resolution which I now make to work out my Salvation with all the Earnestness in the World shall be effectual. And because I have had too much Experience that these Pious Designs are easily forgotten, I will begin this Moment to turn to thee, and to devote my self entirely to thy Service, and I rely upon thy Goodness for Strength to persevere.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Of Sin.

FIRST POINT. *Of Mortal Sin.*

SECOND POINT. *Of Venial Sin.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that all the Calamities and Miseries that are in the World, or have been since the Creation, proceed from mortal Sin: This is the Cause of Wars, Plagues and Famines, of the Destruction of Cities by Fire, and of Men by Sicknes: Eternal Damnation and Hell it self are the dismal Effects of one mortal Sin.

How can we comprehend the Heinousness of mortal Sin? Seeing tho' the Angels were the most perfect Part of the Creation, neither the Nobleness of their Nature, nor all their Perfections, nor their Fitness to glorifie their Maker to all Eternity, nor their being particularly design'd for that end, could exempt them from being plung'd.

plung'd into everlasting Flames, for One mortal Sin of a Moment, express'd in a vain Thought.

For One Act of Disobedience *Adam* was depriv'd of his Original Justice, of all his Natural and Supernatural Gifts; by this One Sin he lost the Priviledge of Immortality, became subject himself, and subjected his Posterity to those innumerable Miseries under which we groan: So many Thousand Years are past and the Divine Vengeance is not yet appeas'd, nor will be till the End of Ages; 'tis the Fire of this Wrath that burns in Hell, and will never be extinguish'd.

The Consideration of the terrible Punishment inflicted on mortal Sin is a clear Proof that it is the greatest of Evils, since God who is Goodness its self, and whose Mercy is exalted above all his Works, is so very severe against one Act of it.

How many Persons, eminent for Virtue, full of Merits, and arrived to a great degree of Sanctity, are now damn'd for one mortal Sin?

If after Three or Fourscore Years of Penance, after a long Life spent in the Exercise of the most heroick Virtues, after having wrought Miracles, if we commit One mortal Sin, all our Penance, all our Virtues, will be counted for nothing; we become Enemies to God, and Objects of his Wrath and Vengeance.

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By the Severity of the Punishment we may conceive some Idea of the Crime; but its Enormity, and the Hatred which God bears to it, are more visible, in the Pains he hath taken, and what it hath cost him to destroy it. Those inconceivable Mysteries of the Incarnation, the Nativity, the Life, the Passion, and the Death, of the Eternal Son, were wrought only for the Destruction of Sin: Nothing less than all the Blood of Christ could redeem One Soul; and after all, this Soul shall be damn'd for One mortal Sin: All the Flames of Hell, those Eternal Flames, could never cleanse the least sinful Spot.

Can we believe this, and live One Moment in Sin? And notwithstanding this extreme Danger, continue to Sin, and to expose our selves every Day to the Occasions of committing it? This is hardly to be imagin'd.

How shall we reconcile our Faith with our Practice? How shall we make our Practice and our Reason agree? We refuse no Pains to oblige a Friend, we are wonderfully exact in every Punctilio of good Breeding, but stupidly careless in the important Duties of a Christian Life. We own that most Afflictions are the Punishments of our Sins; we are all afraid of Hell, yet we are not afraid of Sin, which is the Cause of Hell; how sensible are we of the smallest Loss? How uneasy, how sad, and often incapable of Comfort? Yet how insensible of the greatest, of that irreparable:

parable Loss, which a Million of Worlds can never repair? We sin, but we are not sad, neither do stand in need of Comfort.

Tho' we had committed but One mortal Sin in all our Lives, it would be a just Reason for continual Humiliation; it would be a just Subject of Fear and Trembling to the last Moment of our Lives. We have sinn'd, we are in danger of renewing our Sins, we are uncertain of their Pardon, how can we be without Fear?

Are we sure that we are in a State of Grace? Or do we hope so, because of our reiterated Confessions? Alas! Who hath told us that our Contrition was sincere, that our Sorrow was from a supernatural Motive? How can we be satisfied with our Purposes and Resolutions, when we know by Experience, and by so many Relapses how ineffectual they have often been?

Since God spared not the Angels that sinn'd, how ought we to tremble who have sinn'd after the Knowledge of their terrible Punishment? After having seen the Son of God expire on a Cross to destroy Sin, can I imagine that God will hate Sin less than me!

My God and Saviour, who hast died for me, which thou wouldst not do for the fallen Angels, I humbly beseech thee by the Merits of thy Death to give me that Grace which thou wouldst not offer them: Give me a hearty Sorrow for all my Sins, and incline

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thy Will to answer thy End, in affording me
his Time for Repentance which thou hast
not given many others, and to begin im-
mediately.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that Venial Sins seem small only
to those who have little Faith, and less
love; they who love God truly look upon
all Sin with Horrour, and are more afraid of
than of the greatest Misery. A Venial Sin is
indeed a small Sin, but it is not a small Evil:
as long as it is a Sin, it is a greater Evil
than a general Desolation of the whole Uni-
verse; and therefore the Saints of God have
always judg'd, that all the Creatures ought
to think themselves happy if they could
prevent One Venial Sin by the Sacrifice of
their very Beings.

Moses his Distrust in striking the Rock
once cost him his Life: Five and Twenty
thousand Israelites died in One Day at
Meribah for looking too curiously into
the Ark of God: *David's* Vanity in num-
bering the People brought a terrible Plague
upon them: Two and Forty Children
were devour'd by wild Bears for mocking
the Prophet *Elisha*! And *Hezekiah's* Osten-
tation in shewing his Treasures to the
Ambassadors of *Babylon* could not be ex-
ceeded by less than the Loss of those Treas-
ures.

Thus

Thus God, whose Wisdom is infinite, punishes Venial Sins in this Life; but in the next, where his Justice is not restrain'd by his Mercy, the Punishments of Venial Sins yield in nothing as to their Violence to the Torments of Hell; and this he inflicts even on those Souls whom he loves tenderly, and who love him above all things.

We shall find One Day that the Death of our beloved Child, the Loss of such an Estate, such a Distemper, the Ruin of such a Family, and publick Calamities, are, perhaps, now, as formerly, the Punishments of Venial Sins. God indeed doth not always send visible Chastisements, but then he serves the Sinner for severer Strokes.

For every Venial Sin we deliberately commit, God withdraws some Portion of Grace; and is the Deprivation of Grace a small Loss? Venial Sins do not indeed make God hate us, but they make him love us less; they make him stop the Course of his Bounty, withhold his Graces, and suspect that particular Providence with which he watches over those he loves, and that tender Care whereby he preserves them from Danger, whereby he either keeps them from Temptations, or enables them to overcome them: Venial Sins render a Soul languishing, and insensibly disgust it with Piety, they have brought it into a lukewarm Disposition, the most dangerous State a Soul can be in. And God at length grows weary

our Ingratitude, and cannot suffer that we should believe that we acquit our selves sufficiently of the infinite Obligations we have to him, provided we abstain from offering him the most outrageous Affronts, tho' at the same time we indulge our selves in displeasing him every Hour.

Which of us would have the Patience to keep a Servant only for his Honesty, who had no other good Quality, who did every thing with Reluctancy and by halves, who treated us with Disrespect, and who never took Care to please us, under Pretence that it was in things of no Consequence? And can we expect that God should suffer a Servant whom we would not endure? It is true, that *Venial Sins* do not render us Enemies to God; but it is as true, that he who indulges himself deliberately in many *Venial Sins* does not love God.

Certainly the Man that contents himself with barely not being God's Enemy, esteems his Love but little; the best that can be said is, that he is afraid to have God his Enemy; but very indifferent in desiring him for his Friend. The wilful disobliging a Friend upon all Occasions is a strange Method to make him love us: And I cannot see how we shall be able to reconcile our Profession of loving with our Practice of wilfully displeasing him.

'Tis no Excuse that we offend only in little things, their Smallness renders us inexcusable

excusable, because we might more easily avoid them. If they be little things we cannot pretend that we were discouraged by Difficulties, or that the Violence of our Passions hurry'd us away; it proceeds only from an Indifferency for God whom we serve out of Fear, and flatter our selves that we love him, because we dread his Justice.

No Wonder then if God be as indifferent for us, if he abhor our Baseness, if he withdraw his Favours from such unworthy Wretches, and refuse to communicate himself any more to us. And indeed we cannot expect those peculiar Favours which bestows only on fervent Souls. Thus we run our selves into Danger of committing greater Faults; for a Habit of *Venial Sins* is the High Road to *Mortal Ones*; and God is in a manner oblig'd to deprive us of those Divine Lights, of those Strengthening Graces, without which we can never resist violent Temptations. Hence proceed the surprizing Falls of many who were at first so reserv'd; they began by allowing themselves little Liberties, and so by Degrees fell into such Disorders as before this Unfaithfulness they would have trembled to think of. He who despises little things will most certainly fall by Degrees. For *Venial Sins* can never become *Mortal*, they dispose us for them: If we once content our selves with not losing the Grace of God, we are sure to lose it in a very little time.

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time: These terrible falls startle us; but we did well consider the Disposition in which Venial Sins put the Soul, we should less surpriz'd.

Venial Sins are like the Beginnings of a Sickness, the first Indisposition seems nothing at all, and we think it will easily be cur'd; yet by little and little it undermines our Health, so that the least Excess or unwholesome Air throws us into a malignant Fever, and from thence to the Grave.

Though sometimes Men die suddenly, yet their Deaths are usually preceded by some light Indisposition which seem'd of no consequence. Thus Venial Sins, though never so deliberate and numerous, do not hurt the Soul, but they weaken it, and impair its Strength, so that it languishes, and neglects its Duties but by halves and with reluctance; every thing hurts it, Sacraments, good Works, do it no good. How long a Soul in this Condition remain long in a State of Grace, being thus expos'd to many impending Dangers, depriv'd of Support and Strength, and every Moment running it self farther into Danger. This made an Eminent Saint say, That we ought sometimes to be more careful to avoid small Sins than great ones: And 'tis the Apprehension of not stopping here; 'tis the Fear of being depriv'd of strengthening Grace in Punishment of those little Infirmities; and thereby being left a Prey to Temp-

Temptation that makes the Saints so incapable of Comfort after a Venial Sin.

After all, is a Venial Sin nothing? Is it of no Consequence? What then shall we count something, if it be nothing to offend God? We think it a Matter of Consequence not to disoblige a Friend; we think it a Matter of Consequence not to be rude to any Man, so much as by Mistake, and shall we think it a slight thing deliberately to displease God? Shall we think it nothing to lessen his Kindness to us, to stop the Channel of his Graces, to diminish the Fervour of Charity, and to render all the Sacraments of no use? Shall we think our selves affronted by a rash Word? And shall we think that Fault little which offends God, which draws his Indifference on us, tho' not his Hatred, which will make us lose those inestimable Treasures that are worth more than all the Riches in the World? Shall we make nothing of disposing our selves to fall into mortal Sin, and of indulging our selves in those Irregularities which are often the beginning of the Reprobation of many who appear'd Eminent for Piety?

Consider what are our Thoughts of Venial Sin: Have we fully resolv'd in all our Confessions to mend them? For it is much to be fear'd, that by frequent confessing the same Venial Sins, we too often render our Confessions at best useless for want of Con-

trition

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ion. Let us no longer look upon them
little things, there are but few things
we ought to fear so much. Let us
examine our selves strictly, and according-
regulate or Practise.

*Third Meditation. Of the Sentiments we
shall have at the Hour of Death. See
the third Meditation for the Months
of January and July, Pag. 56.*

April

R.

April and October.

FIRST MEDITATION.

That we ought not to delay our Conversion.

FIRST POINT. *If we delay our Conversion, we thereby put our selves in an evident Danger of being never Converted.*

SECOND POINT. *If we delay Conversion, we thereby put our selves under a kind of Necessity of being never Converted.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that there is no Christian who has not some time or other desired to turn sincerely to God ; there are certain happy Moments, wherein by an inward Light we discover on a sudden so many Faults

Creatures, we find so little Solidity in every thing on the Earth, and are so disgusted with what seem'd most Charming, that we cannot avoid Confessing that to neglect the Service of God is the highest Degree of Madness.

Our Reason is Convinc'd, but our Passions are too Strong, and we have not Resolution enough to oppose them; therefore Self-love finds an Expedient to flatter both; it satisfies our Reason, by perswading us to resolve on Conversion, and pleases our Sloth, by engaging us to defer it, and to retain our former habits; but here it apparently Deceives us, for this Delay puts us into an evident Danger of never being Converted.

Time, Grace, and a willing Mind, are necessary to Conversion; if we put it off but for One Day, how can we promise our selves that One Day? If we have that Day, are we sure that we shall be more willing to improve it? And who hath told us that we shall then be assisted with a more efficacious Grace than that which we have hitherto resisted?

Is any thing more uncertain than Time? How many have been surpriz'd by Death while they were deliberating? And would it not be a dismal thing to die full of Designs for a future Conversion?

We think it is not now a fit Time to sit our dangerous Conversations, to avoid the Occasions of Sin, to reform our Lives, and to live more retir'd, and more like Chri-

H

istians:

stians: Alas! What Time would we have? We are for staving till the Heat of Youth is past, till Age and Experience have disabus'd us as to those Trifles which take us up now, and then every thing will Contribute to our Conversion

Thus the greatest Part of Mankind argue about their Projects of Conversion, for no Man pretends to die Unconverted; but do they reason well? Do we find many of those Resolvers converted before they die? We accept (saith St. *Augustin*) their Penance, who defer their Conversion to the End of their Lives, but we make no great Account of such Conversions. No, my Brethren, (adds that great Saint) I dare not deceive you, and therefore must declare that we make no great Account of them.

We refuse to be Converted now, what Grounds have we to believe that we shall be more willing hereafter? If we find Difficulties now, we shall meet with greater then; they increase with our Passions, which will then be Stronger; and instead of Youthful Amusements, which take up our Time now, we shall then find that Multitude of Business will be a greater Hindrance. Do not Flatter your selves that you may be Converted at any Time; who has told you that you shall at all Times be capable of Conversion? If we refuse to be Converted when God invites us now, when our ill Habits are but weak and few, can we reasonably

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expect to be able to do it hereafter, when they are multiply'd, and grown inveterate? God will be weary of waiting; his Solicitations will diminish as our Resistance of his Grace encreases; so that we are forc'd to own that we run the greatest Hazard in the World by delaying, and yet we are not afraid to venture.

Was it ever heard that a condemn'd Malefactor was unwilling to receive his Pardon, and desir'd it might be deferr'd to another Time? God offers us his Friendship, he tenders his Pardon to us, and we are unwilling to have it yet; we desire him to stay till we are in Humour to receive it. He solicites us, and we bid him keep his Love for another Time; would we treat the worst of Men thus? And how should we resent his Usage our selves?

Every Man promises himself Time for conversion; if Jesus Christ had promis'd us with an Oath that we should have Notice of his coming, we could not live in greater security than we do, tho' we know that he hath sworn the direct contrary.

Did ever any Merchant, when he had found an Opportunity of recovering all his losses, put it off to another Time, and defer securing his Fortune till the next Day? Could not we think a Man distracted, who being dangerously Sick, should desire his Physician not to visit him till Five or Six Days hence?

Am not I, with all my Pretensions to Wisdom, this distracted Man, when I delay my Conversion One Day? I am not out of Favour with God, my Soul is dangerously ill, the most efficacious Remedies do me no Good, my Sicknes encreases, God sollicites and beseeches me to be cur'd: he desires only my Consent, and I refuse his Offer.

Has not the Son of God prevented all our Excuses, and all our false Pretences, by declaring that he will come when we are not aware of him? This is not only the Counsel of a Wise and knowing Friend, it is the Decision of the Lord of Life and Death, who knows the Time in which he designs to call us. Let our Designs and Projects be never so well laid, Death will come when we least expect it.

Did we ever see a Man die, were we ever dangerously ill our selves, without resolving to turn to God? And yet we are still unconverted. Our last Sicknes will put us on the same Resolutions; but how can we be sure they will be more sincere than the former. And why should we think that God will accept them?

Men tremble when they find themselves in Danger of losing their Lives or Estates: is it nothing to lose our Souls by remaining unconverted? If the Loss of a Soul be so small a Matter, why did Jesus Christ die and suffer so much to redeem it?

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My God, thou desirest not the Death of a Sinner, thou desirest his Conversion; so that it is my own Fault if I be not converted. Am I unwilling? And how can I pretend to be willing if I put it off from Day to Day?

One would think it were a great Misfortune to be wholly thine, since Men give themselves to thee as late as they can; I am terrified by other Dangers, is not this of being lost for ever a much greater Danger?

It is resolv'd, O my God, it is resolv'd, I will defer no longer; but tho' I am willing, it is thou alone that must convert me; do it, and then I shall be truly converted.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that by deferring our Conversion, we are not only in Danger, but under a kind of Necessity of never being converted: When the Scripture exhorts us to seek God while he may be found, it teaches us there is a Time when he will not be found; what then must a Man expect whom God hath sought in vain several Years together, and who has been insensible to all his Goodness?

Do we think our selves too young to be devout, and that we ought to stay till we are older, and then be converted? This is as much as to say that we have not sufficiently offended God; that when we have

abus'd his Goodness more, and driven our Ingratitude as far as we can, we will then begin to serve him. Will he accept of our Service then? 'Tis true, God will never refuse a Sinner that is really converted, but the Difficulty lies in being converted, seeing we will not be converted now when God desires it, can we be sure of doing it when we shall have all the Reason in the World to doubt whether he continues to desire it?

Could the Apostles reasonably expect a second Call from *Christ* to leave all and follow him if they had delay'd till next Day to obey the first? Could they expect to have more Courage next Day? They who were *Invited to the Supper* in the Gospel were but twice invited, and excus'd themselves but once upon very plausible Pretences, which were yet sufficient to exclude them for ever from the Feast, and to seal their Reprobation.

The Difficulties and Obstacles we meet with now, and which we pretend are already invincible, will augment in Number and Force every Day; we say we cannot be converted now, we shall be less able hereafter. The Spiritual Helps of Reading and Meditating on the great Truths of the Gospel, the Counsels of a wise Director, the frequenting of the Sacraments have no Effect on us now: Upon what then do we build our Hopes of Conversion? We would not yield at first when

we were touch'd with those Truths, much less shall we yield our selves when we are grown insensible.

We accustom our selves to every thing in time; the best Advice, and the most terrible Truths, will make no Impression on our Affections, and less on our Hearts; like those who are continually about Dying People, we shall by Degrees lose all sense of what terrify'd us at first. By frequent slighting the Thoughts of Hell, we shall become little afraid of it; do we expect to be disabus'd then? Alas! We are already convinc'd of our Danger; for why do we intend to turn to God at last, if we be not perswaded that we are in a dangerous State?

Suppose a longer Experience should make us see our Errour, and wean us from the false Pleasure and the false Liberty of the World, so that we cease to esteem them, we shall still retain them out of Custom, Interest, Obstinacy, or Inclination. Tho' we glory no longer in being Libertines, in following the Maxims of the World, and in not being devout, we shall insensibly continue so, because we are us'd to it; unless we are absolutely resolv'd to be deceiv'd, we cannot propose to our selves to overcome so many multiply'd Obstacles all at once; when with a greater Assistance of Grace than we can expect, and with less Guilt, we have not Courage enough to conquer one single Sin.

We perswade our selves that at the Hour of Death the Sense of approaching Danger

will make us turn to God ; but how can we rely upon a Conversion to which we are excited only by the Presence of Death, and which must therefore infallibly be the Effect of Fear ?

And for a clear Proof that those Conversions are seldom sincere, how many have we seen truly converted after a great Sickness ? Besides, it is an Article of our Faith that the Son of Man will come at an Hour when he is least expected ; so that although the Death of the greatest Part of Mankind be not sudden, yet it is unforeseen ; and *Jesus Christ* hath declar'd with an Oath, that he will be inflexible to all the Prayers of those who expect their last Hour to turn to him ; so that we must either believe the *Son of God* mistaken, or that he had a Design to deceive us ; or we must believe that the Sinner who defers his Repentance to a Death-Bed will die impenitent.

Our Saviour does not say that we shall continue obstinate to the last, that we shall not beg him to forgive us, or that we shall not have time, but I foretel you (saith he) that you shall die as you have liv'd.

But we must always hope ; true, but that is no Christian Hope which is contrary to our Faith.

The Merits of our Redeemer might indeed save us, if his Word and his Gospel had not already condemn'd us.

Can we imagine that the great Work of Eternal Salvation, which is the Work of our whole Lives, and for which Christ himself judg'd no less Time necessary, can be done in a few Hours; that it can be done well in those last Moments? After all this, can we believe that when we have delay'd it from one Day to another we may easily do it, notwithstanding we put our selves under a kind of Necessity of not doing it at all?

Where Eternity is concern'd we ought to hope only on solid Grounds; the only Foundation of Hope is the Word of God; and yet we hope against this express Word.

How long hath God solicited us to be converted? And yet how long do we continue to resist his Grace?

If we had no other Motives than the Assurance that Grace is offer'd us, that God is ready to receive us, that we may be this very Moment, if we will, in the Condition we shall wish for when we come to die, the want of which will then drive us to Despair, do we need any other to make us resolve?

Would a damn'd Soul delay one Moment if he had my Time, and the Means of Conversion that I have? Those wretched Souls were once what I am; have not I Reason to fear that I shall be one Day what they are? They deferr'd their Conversion, and are damn'd for it, am not I in Danger of being damn'd for the same Delay?

'Tis strange that we can put off our Conversion to the last; that is, to do the most important and difficult Work in the World: We wait for a Season wherein we shall be wholly incapable of any thing; wherein a Man would be thought mad, or at least imprudent, that should talk to us of Business. Is a sick or dying Man in a Condition to talk of Business? And yet it is to this Time which we our selves acknowledge to be very unfit for the most trivial Affairs, that we defer the greatest Business in the World, the Business of Salvation, and of Eternity.

How can we think of being converted one Day, and yet defer it, tho' but to the next? The Design of being converted, implies that we believe our Souls in Danger, that we are sensible of the want of Love to God, that we do not serve him faithfully, that we are out of his Favour, and that we dare not die in the State in which we live. He who defers his Conversion wilfully, lives in a continual Danger, by which so many perish every Day; he refuses to Love God, and is content to be out of Favour with him: He resolves to live in a State wherein he is afraid to Die, and this after serious Reflection, and after several Designs to change this Life; he resolves to persist in Enmity to God, the very time when God tenders him Grace, and presses him to accept his Friendship. Can any Christian, can any rational

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Man; make this Reflection, and afterwards defer his Conversion One Moment.

Alas, my dear Saviour, I am but too capable of doing this; these Reflections, and an Hundred more, will be to no Purpose if thou dost not convert me; Oh! Do it for thy Mercies Sake; as this is the Day wherein I resolve to be converted, so let it be the Day of my perfect Conversion.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Of the good Use of Time.

FIRST POINT. *That Time is very precious.*

SECOND POINT. *That the Loss of Time can never be repaired.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that nothing is so precious as Time, every Moment is worth an Eternity; that the Glory of the Saints, the Eternal Joys of Heaven, which Christ hath purchased

chas'd for us by his Blood, are the Reward of the good use we make of our Time.

Time is so precious, that the smallest Part of it is worth more than all the Honours and Riches in the World; and tho' we employ but One Moment to get all those Honours and Riches, if that be all we gain by it, God, who judges righteously, will look upon that Moment as lost. If a damn'd Soul were Master of all the Kingdoms of the Earth, he would give them all, and all its Treasures, for one of those precious Minutes which he formerly spent in Folly, and which we lose every Day.

Comprehend if you can what Grace and the Possession of God is; this Grace, this God, are the Price of our Time, which is given us only to obtain more Grace, and by its Assistance to merit the Enjoyment of God; and it is certain, that by every Moment we spend for any thing else, we lose more than the whole World can repay.

The Saints in Heaven, by reiterated, perfect Acts of Virtue to Eternity, cannot merit a greater Degree of Glory; Yet this I can merit every Moment if I will, by One true Act of Love to God: Reprobates will not be able to satisfy the Divine Justice, nor to obtain the Pardon of One Sin, by all their Regrets and Tears, nor by an Eternity of dreadful Sufferings; but I may do it every Moment by one Sigh, or one Tear; by One Act of Contrition I may appease the Wrath of God.

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Eternal Happiness or Misery will be the Consequence of my Use or Abuse of Time; I can Work out my Salvation only while Time lasts; how then can Men be so much at a Loss how to employ their Time? How can they amuse themselves, and be taken up with Trifles, only to pass away the Time? You do not know how to spend the Time. Have you never offended God? Are you not oblig'd to him? Have you receiv'd no Favours from him? Ought not you to adore and serve him? The glorious Saints do not think Eternity too long to love, to praise, to bless and honour him, and shall we think an Hour or a Day too long?

You don't know what to do; have you no Sins to grieve for? Don't you know that Jesus Christ is in Person on the Altar, where he expects to be ador'd, and is ador'd but by few? And can you want Employment for your Time? We are never at a Loss how to spend our Time, but when we have most Time to serve and love God: For we can spend whole Days in Business and vain Pleasures, in offending God, and destroying our Souls, without being uneasy, or thinking the Time long.

Let us consider that we can secure our Salvation only while Time lasts, and that all the time of our Lives is given us only for this End; how careful ought we then to be of improving it? Every Moment is precious; we lose all if we lose our Time.

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But do we much value this Loss? Do we think that there is such a thing as the Loss of Time? We Improve every Moment for things of no Consequence, we are cast down at Disappointments, and with all our Care and Diligence we are continually afraid that we shall want Time.

But alas! A Time will come when we shall think otherwise, because we shall have juster Thoughts; a Time will come wherein we shall regret those favourable Days and Hours which we Mis-spend now; a Time will come when we would give all the World to recal some of those precious Moments which we now throw away, and wilfully lose; when we shall be torn with Despair to find that they are all lost, and that Time is past.

Then will you cry out, Oh! That I were now in the Condition I was in such a Day of my Life, when I was Meditating upon the Improvement of Time: Oh! That I had now the same Health and Strength my God, what would I not do? But Wretch that I am, I fore-saw this Despair, which torments me now, for having lost my Time, why did I make no Use of that Foresight, nor of that Time.

Time is short, it Ends with our Lives, we have already pass'd the greatest Part of them, and to what Purpose? What Use have I made of this last Year? How much Time have I lost in doing what

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ought not, or in omitting what I ought to have done? And how little of it have I spent in doing my Duty? My God, what a terrible Account have I to give of my Time, and of these present Reflections?

How can I expect Mercy from God, if I make no better use of what is left, if I defer my Conversion any longer? How many are dead who were in better Health than I some Months ago? How many seem now in their full Vigour who will be in the Grave before the Year is past? And how do I know that I shall not be one of them?

Let us then work while we have time; we cannot expect it should be long, and therefore let us not defer our Conversion one Moment.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that you can never repair the Loss of Time; that all you can do will never recal one Moment; and if you be capable of Reflection, and be seriously desirous of Salvation, this will be sufficient to convince you of the Importance of redeeming Time.

It is certain that all the Moments of our Lives are counted; let us employ them well or ill, we shall not increate their Number, for it is fix'd, and lessens continually. An Hour ago we had so much
more

more Time to work out our Salvation, an Hour hence we shall have so much less.

Though we live Holily after the Example of *St. Paul*, and do not lose one Moment of what is left, yet it is most certain that a Moment once gone will return no more; and that if it be imploy'd ill 'tis lost. If we imploy the rest of our Time well, we may escape the Dangers into which our Abuse of the past has brought us, but we cannot undo what we have done; we have still lost so many precious Hours, and with them all the Graces which God would have bestow'd on us, and all the Good we might have done in them.

My God, what a Loss is this? So many Moments lost since we had first the Use of Reason, and with them so many Graces beyond Recovery.

When we spend Hours and Days in Vanity, we call it *Passing the Time*, a Phrase very unfit for a Christian's Mouth: We pass away the Time, Time it self passes away; the Time so pass'd is lost, and neither it, nor the Graces we could have merited in it, will return any more.

The Grace of Predestination is in some manner annex'd to some certain Moments: what will become of us if God has fix'd ours to some of those Moments that are past and lost! The Fear of having lost is indeed a sure and sensible Mark that

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am not yet depriv'd of it; but what must I expect if I let slip this Opportunity, and do not grow better by this Fear?

We know Time is precious and short, and yet we complain it passes slowly; we are continually wishing for some Time to come; whence proceeds this Uneasiness? Are we weary of Living? No, but we make ill Use of our Time; and that Loss which we see and feel disturbs our Quiet, and makes us think the Time long: All our Pleasures and Diversions cannot free us from this Uneasiness, which never quits those who lose their Time. But they who improve it well for their Salvation are not subject to this Uneasiness; nothing is so easy, so full of Peace as they. Many Saints have, with *St. Paul*, desir'd to be deliver'd from their Exile, that they might perfectly enjoy their God, and be out of danger of losing him; but we never find that they were uneasy in the Discharge of their Duties, in doing the Will of God. So true it is, that to be intirely satisfy'd and contented, we need only make a good Use of Time, by yielding Obedience to the Divine Will.

But here let us examine what Use we have made of our Time; it's pass'd, and it be lost too, how great is our Loss? How shall we repair it? If we had improv'd those many Moments, Hours, and Days, as a Christian ought to do, we should now reap the Fruit in Spiritual Consolations;

ons; instead of which we feel nothing but
Regret for having lost so much Time, and
terrible Apprehensions for the exact Account
we must give of it.

Let us therefore at least make good Use
of what is left, for the Period of our Life
is fix'd; and we draw nearer it every Mo-
ment; a Time will come when we can
improve Time no longer, because it will
be follow'd by Eternity. Let us for the
future improve the little that remains, and
not lose one single Moment.

*Third Meditation of the Sentiments we shall
have at the Hour of Death. See the Third
Meditation for the Months of January
and July, Pag. 56.*

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FIRST MEDITATION.

Of the Unwillingness of most Christians, and the Insincerity of their Desires to be Saved.

FIRST POINT. *He who sincerely desires to be Saved must make use of the Means.*

SECOND POINT. *It is not enough to make use of some Means, but we must make use of all the necessary Means of Salvation.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that altho' every Man pretends to be willing to be Saved, yet there are very few truly willing. The most harden'd sinner will sometimes tell you that he intends to be converted; the most unfaithful Religious

Religious believes himself desirous of Perfection, because no Man is so mad, or so much his own Enemy, as to be fond of Ruin, and we know that without Conversion we are ruin'd for ever.

But if we stop there, and content our selves with saying we desire it, without making use of the Means, we have indeed the Thought of Conversion, but not the Will.

If we consult either our Faith or Reason, the Torments of Hell will make us afraid, and the great Truths of our Religion will startle us; but we deceive our selves if we take this for Conversion; 'tis only Conviction that we ought to be converted to.

A good natural Disposition or Education may inspire us with an Admiration of Virtue, and a Horrour of Vice, but the Understanding has a greater Share in these Sentiments than the Will; and it is much to be feared that such an Aversion to Sin is only a Hatred of its dismal Consequences, and such a Love of Piety is no more than an agreeable Idea of the Happiness that attends it, without any efficacious Desire of Salvation.

Let us not deceive our selves, we shall not be judg'd according to the good Thoughts we have entertain'd, but according to the good Works we have done. Hell is full of Souls who were as willing to be Saved as the greatest Part of Christians are, and can we content our selves with a better a Will than theirs?

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We do not design to be damn'd; there is not one Soul in Hell that ever design'd; but like a frantick, sick Man, who says he would fain be well, yet will not take any thing to make him so; who satisfies himself with thinking on the Benefits of Health, but will make use of no Means to be Cur'd; so we desire to be Sav'd, but will not make use of the Means of Salvation. Can any Man in his Wits imagine that this is the Way to Heaven? And what Truth would there be in our Religion if it were?

Can we fancy that a faint Desire is sufficient to Save us without Use of Means? All the Damn'd Souls have had that Desire. Can we entertain a Thought so Injurious to the Wisdom of Jesus Christ, and so unworthy our holy Faith? Christ will not have the most Laborious, Careful Christians believe themselves out of Danger, and sure of their Reward, tho' they have neglected one of the Means of Salvation, tho' they have liv'd in a constant Practice of all Virtues; and shall we think we make our Salvation sure while we do nothing for it, while we are so plung'd in the Love and Pursuit of the World, that we hardly remember that we are Christians? If we can once believe that we may be Saved without the Use of Means, we must believe that Christ had a Design to impose upon us, in giving such Laws; we must look on all the Saints as Men who had lost their Reason; for

for why should they think it impossible to be Sav'd without living up to the Strictness of the Gospel, if none be Damn'd but those who maliciously, and in cold Blood resolve to be so.

One would think it impossible for any Christian to entertain so palpable an Error; for who can expect to attain an End without using the Means? Yet how many are there who say they would be Saved that will not use the Means? How many Religious think their whole Work done when they have left the World? But *St Paul* did not think his Salvation sure, tho' he had left all for Christ, tho' he had Labour'd and Suffer'd so much for his Service; and therefore he tells us, *that he Chastis'd his Body, and brought it into Submission, lest after having Preach'd to others he himself should become a Cast-away,* Cor. 9. 27.

We are engag'd in an unlawful Design, we retain our Neighbour's Goods unjustly, we nourish Hatred and Malice in our Hearts; and tho' we are thus Slaves to our Passions, tho' we do not know how to offer the least Violence to our Inclinations, because the Speculation of the Blessedness and Glory of the Just in Heaven makes us conclude that it is good to be there, shall we take this for a sincere Desire to be Saved? Surely we must renounce our Reason if we do.

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How many do we see every Day Toiling and Labouring for Pleasure and Gain, their hearts entirely taken up with them, and all their Thoughts employ'd about making their fortune with so much Application, that they scarce think of their being Christians; tho' because a solemn Holiday, or some unusual Accident revives the Impressions of Religion which they had receiv'd in their childhood, and makes them spare a few moments for some confus'd Reflections on those great Truths; because the Apprehensions of Eternal Misery makes them tremble for a while, tho' they go no farther, but immediately return with more Eagerness to their Disorders; tho' the first Object revives those Impressions; tho' they themselves seek to forget them, that they may not be disturb'd in their Indifference and carelessness of Salvation, yet fancy that they are very desirous to be Saved. Alas! They are no otherwise desirous of it than the damned in Hell were before them.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that Men are seldom so unreasonable as to expect to be Sav'd without making use of Means; but they Pick and Chuse; they will make use of some, but not of all; they will use those Means that please them, not those that are most proper for obtaining their End.

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Like the sick Man, of whom St. Ignatius speaks, who chuses his Physick not by the Doctor's Advice, but his own Palate; refusing those Prescriptions which are proper for his Distemper, and takes only such as please his Taste; can we think that such a Man is efficaciously desirous to be Cur'd?

Is that Desire of Salvation with which we please our selves more sincere? We rarely meet with Men who resolve to observe neither Commands nor Counsels. We would be Saved, and we are willing to use some Means, provided we may choose them: Among so many Commands which Christ has given us 'tis impossible that we should have an Aversion for all; we choose only those that please us, tho' the rest are never so necessary. Enormous Sins irritate us, but the Reservedness so necessary to preserve our Innocence does not agree with us; we are ready to give our selves to God if we may have Leave to retain our favourite Passions.

If we find no Difficulty in Fasting, we are easily Convinc'd that we cannot obtain Heaven without it; but because we find it less easy to mortify our Passions, to pardon Injuries, and to observe a serious collection, we think it sufficient to fast and that we may dispence with the rest without Danger.

Hence proceeds that monstrous Mixture of Virtues and Vices in the same Person

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who make Profession of Holiness to the Prejudice of true and real Vertue. Hence it proceeds that we see so little Amendment; we trust to those Vertues which we think we have, and take no Notice of the greatest Part of our Faults.

We do indeed make use of some Means, but not of all; and those we chuse are generally the most improper to attain our End; we do not examine whether they be the best, but whether they be the easiest, the most suitable to our Inclinations, and which please us most. We are ready to quit this Occasion of Debauchery, but will not break off an Acquaintance, or renounce an Employment, tho' it be a continual Source of Sin.

Some are willing to give Alms, but they are unwilling to inquire if they have nothing that belongs to another, for fear of being oblig'd to Restitution; some are willing to make Restitution, but they will not think of pardoning an Injury; others are inclin'd to Forgive, but they will not sacrifice a criminal or dangerous Friendship to the Care of their Salvation: A Religious Man is resolv'd never to return into the World, but he takes little Pains to perfect himself in his Station; he trembles at the Thought of breaking his Vows, but he slight the Observation of his Rule, tho' the keeping of his Vows generally depends on the strict Observation of it.

These Men have indeed some Reason to think that they are unwilling to be Damn'd; but it is certain that they do not really desire to be Saved; 'tis evident that they desire it only by halves; their Desire is not sincere; by seeming to do something for Salvation they think themselves secure, while by not doing all that is requir'd of them they render their Peril much greater.

Can that Man be in earnest who says he desires to be Sav'd, and yet refuses to make use of all the Means? When a Sick Man refuses to take all necessary Remedies, have we not Reason to tell him, Surely, you have a mind to die? This is just the Case of most Men, who say they would be Saved, yet will not use all necessary Means; may we not very well make them the same Reproach, Surely, you have a mind to be Damn'd?

Where is our Sincerity? Where is our Truth? Can we impose upon our selves so far as to think that we sincerely desire to save our Souls at the same time that we neglect them so strangely? While we are so earnest and diligent when we desire to succeed in any Worldly Business?

What a Difference is there between a Man following his Business or his Study, and the same Man working out his Salvation? Were we as earnest for Heaven as we are for Honours and Riches, we should soon be

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be great Saints; for we cannot be rich if we will, but we may be Saints if we will.

We are not contented to make use of all necessary Means to obtain our Temporal Ends; we employ even those that are not necessary, and we justify all this Care and Pains by saying that we would not have any Neglect to reproach our selves; do we observe this Maxim in the Business of our Soul? Shall we have nothing to reproach our selves on a Death-Bed?

If we do not design to be Saved, why do we make use of any Means? If we do design it, why do we not make use of all? Is it not because some are more difficult than others? But to what purpose do we practise only those that are easy, since they are all necessary? Are we ignorant that he who does not do all he ought to be Saved, is no more advanc'd than if he had done nothing?

Do we think some few and doubtful Means sufficient in a Business of Consequence? And would we venture its Success upon such Means as common Experience has found very improper for a Business of that Nature? Certainly the Business of Salvation is a Business of Consequence.

Jesus Christ hath declar'd that he will have all or nothing, that he will accept

no divided Heart; there is no *Medium*, they who are not absolutely for him, are against him. Yet notwithstanding we all know this Lukewarmness and Tepidity, this divided Heart is the Character of most Christians at this Day.

Thus we live; but did any of the Saints sanctifie himself by such a Life? Do not we our selves doubt of the Salvation of those who die in such a State? What shall we think of our Condition if we don't take other Measures after all these Reflections? Can we reasonably expect to be Saved?

And that which makes our Danger yet more visible, is, that our Lives are a manifest Contradiction to our Faith; and yet we do not mind it; we are convinced that it is necessary to Salvation to believe the Mystery of the Trinity, and of the Eu-
 charist, notwithstanding all the Difficulties that Sense and Reason suggest, because God hath reveal'd them; but hath not the same God declared that he who will be Saved must abhor the Maxims of the World, that he must bear the Cross daily, and must make use of those very Means which I neglect? We durst not pretend a Desire of Salvation if we refus'd to believe the least Title of what *Christ* requires us to believe in order to be Saved, how then can I pretend that I desire to be Saved if I practise only some Part of the Means which he hath clearly

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told were absolutely necessary to Salvation.

But our Religion is too sincere not to condemn this Contradiction between our Faith and Manners; it teaches us that God requires all or nothing, and surely he deserves very little if he does not deserve all: It would be better for us to give him none, than not to give him all: Such a Division is exceeding injurious to him; for in fine, we carry our selves thus only to those whom we neither respect nor fear; God abhors this Conduct; he hates Tepidity more than Coldness, and therefore cannot endure to be serv'd by Halves.

Absolute Perfection is not necessary, but our Saviour commands every one efficaciously to seek Perfection in his Station; do not object that the Number of these Men of Good Will is so very small, that if this be true there will be but few Saved; who can doubt of it after what Christ hath told us of the small Number of the Elect? Do we see many who *love God with all their Hearts*? How can we pretend that we are sincerely desirous of Salvation while we do not observe this first and great Commandment? While we make use only of some Means, and neglect the rest; and while we satisfy our selves with some pretended good Works of our own chusing, and indulge our selves in our belov'd Passion, which is a continual source of Sin.

I see now, my God, that I have not been truly willing; that I have hitherto deceiv'd my self with a false Desire, which hath kept me in Ignorance of the greatness of my Danger; but I am now resolv'd sincerely to be Saved at any Rate, and I have some Grounds to believe that I am truly Willing; but it is thy Grace, my dear Saviour, that must render my Desire efficacious; I hope for it through thy Mercy; I am convinc'd of the Necessity of using all the Means; this Conviction hath dispos'd me to do what ever thou commandest; command now what ever thou pleasest, I will make no Difficulty. I will obey without any Reserve.

SECOND

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SECOND MEDITATION.

Of Lukewarmness.

FIRST POINT. *There is no State more dangerous than a Lukewarm State.*

SECOND POINT. *It is harder to recover out of a Lukewarm State than from any other.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that by a Lukewarm State is meant a certain Disposition of the Soul, in which it contents its self with avoiding heinous Sins, but takes little Care to avoid small Faults; it is Negligent in Spiritual Duties, its Prayers are Distracted, its Confessions without Amendment, its Communications without Fervour, and without Fruit; it is Unfaithful to the Divine Grace, and Sins without Fear or Remorse.

Such a Soul grows indifferent to the greatest Virtues, and soon after disgusted with them: Its Affections languish in the

Service of God, so that the Yoke of Christ seems heavy and insupportable; its Thoughts are Distracted and so very little taken up with God or its self, that it suffers them to rove after every Object; it dares not retire into its self, because it can find no Peace there: In this Condition it makes no Scruple of Exposing its self to the Occasions of Sin; if it does any Good 'tis only by Fits, if it performs any Duties 'tis only out of Custom: And provided it keeps some Measures, and avoids the Reproaches of those of whom it stands in Awe, it is not at all Sollicitous to please God, whom it offends almost by every Action.

It makes no Difficulty of committing all Sorts of Venial Sins with Deliberation, it performs with Reluctancy and Uneasiness those Devotions which it cannot avoid, it entertains an Aversion for Pious Christians because their Vertue is an uneasy Reproach to it, it takes Pleasures only in the imperfect, because their Actions countenance its Carelessness.

Hence proceed those pernicious Friendships to which so many pretended Friends owe their Ruin, those insipid Railleries of Christian Exactness, whereby they stiffen the small Remainders of their Fervour; they are no sooner in this Wretched State of Lukewarmness, but they frame to themselves a false Conscience, under the Shelter of

which

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which they frequent the Sacraments, and do some Good Works, yet still indulge themselves in secret Aversions, in envious Jealousies, in criminal and dangerous Engagements, in Uneasiness and Murmuring against their Superiours, in Self-Love and Pride, which influence almost all their Actions, and in a hundred other Faults of the same Nature, in the midst of which they live unconcern'd; they perswade themselves that there is no great Crime in all this, and seek for Excuses to palliate those Faults which God condemns as heinous Sins, and which they themselves will condemn as such when they come to die; for then their Passions will be no longer able to hinder them from seeing things as they are in themselves; surely it is no hard Matter to discover that the Salvation of a Man in such a State as this is in great Danger.

The State of a Soul in *Mortal Sin* is very dangerous, but our Saviour judges a Lukewarm State to be yet worse; for he tells the Angel or Bishop of the Church of *Laodicea*, I would thou wert either Cold or Hot; because thou art Lukewarm, and neither Cool nor Hot, I will cast thee out of my Mouth as tainted and offensive.

Does *Jesus Christ*, who bears with the greatest Sinners, who is always ready to pardon them, who did not abhor even *Judas* himself, does he abhor a Lukewarm Soul? Hath he, who is so tender towards

Sinners, no Tenderneſs, no Love, for a Soul that is neither Cold nor Hot? What Hopes then can ſuch a Soul have of being Saved?

We ought not to deſpair of the Salvation of the moſt notorious Sinner; though his Diſorders and Crimes have render'd his Conversion difficult, we ought ſtill to hope, for he knows his Sins, and is therefore more capable of being made ſenſible of them, and of hating them. Tell the greateſt Sinner of the ſevere Judgments of God, of Death, and of the Rigour and Duration of Eternal Torments, the Force of theſe terrible Verities may alarm and convert him, but all this makes no Impreſſion on a Lukewarm Soul; his Condition is without Remedy, becauſe it abſtains from crying and ſcandalous Sins, which ſtartle a Soul that hath any Fear left: It does not mind Spiritual and Interiour Faults, it mingles them with ſome Actions of Piety, ſo that they eaſily paſs unregarded by a Conſcience that is not exceeding tender; and thus, not knowing the Greatneſs of its Danger, it does nothing to prevent it.

Nothing does a Soul good in this Condition; Prayers, Exhortations, Reading, Maſſes, Meditations, Sacraments, are all fruitleſs: Whether it be that the little Benefit it hath hitherto receiv'd by them gives it a Diſguſt, and takes away its Deſire to make uſe of them; or that being accuſtom'd to them they have leſs Effect; that having

heard

heard these terrible Truths discours'd of an hundred times, and having as often discours'd of them its self to no purpose, they make no Impression on it.

It receives but few Graces, because of its Unfaithfulness in those which it does receive; its Faults are always great, because they are attended with an higher Contempt, a greater Malice, and a blacker Ingratitude, than the Faults of others: This odious Mixture of Good and Bad, which composes the Character of a Lukewarm Soul, discovers clearly how injurious such a Conduct is to God: The seeming Good Works that it does are a convincing Proof that it hath not forgotten God, but its careless and imperfect Way of doing them shews how little it stands in awe of that God whom it serves with so much Indifference and Disgust: And indeed this Disgust is mutual, it has an Aversion to *Christ*, and *Christ* hath an Aversion to it; No Wonder that such Men immediately after their Communion are ready to return again to, and renew their Sins as if they had not receiv'd; the Opinion of their pretended Good Works renders them Proof against all wholesome Advice; they can hear it with all the Coldness in the World, and 'tis this that makes so many good Thoughts and Holy Inspirations useless.

Hence proceeds the strange Blindness of a Lukewarm Soul, and that horrible Insensibility, which is the heaviest of Judgments,
and

and the utmost Degree of Misery: And therefore St. *Bernard* and St. *Bonaventure* declare, that it is much easier to convert a Worldling, though never so Wicked, than a Lukewarm Religious.

What Hope is left for such a Soul? There is no Remedy for it; it will not be cur'd, because it is not sensible of its Illness: It is a Sick Creature, whose Condition is the more desperate; because it laughs at those who think it Sick; so that there is need of a greater Miracle to convert a Lukewarm Soul, than to make the Blind to see, or to raise the Dead to Life.

None but thou, my God, can'st do it? Thou art able to cure the most inveterate Diseases, but thou hatest Lukewarmness, and this makes me fear; I cannot pray with that Confidence as I would for the most scandalous Sinner; I acknowledge that I have been hitherto in a Lukewarm State. But since thou hast made me sensible of it, I am perswaded thou desirest to draw me out of it. Oh! Let not this renewed Grace, which perhaps will be the last thou wilt ever offer me, be ineffectual. Thou would'st have me be saved, I am resolv'd to be saved, what then can hinder my Salvation?

SECOND POINT.

Consider that a Lukewarm State is not only very dangerous, but which is more strange, it is almost impossible to recover a Soul out of it; because he that would recover must be sensible of his being in Danger, which a tepid Soul is not.

A heinous Sinner easily knows his Danger; there are certain favourable Moments, wherein, by the Help of Grace, he discovers so much Deformity in his Soul, that he presently laments his Misery, which Knowledge and Confession render his Conversion much less difficult.

But a Lukewarm Soul does not believe that he is Lukewarm; he that believes himself tepid, ceases to be so, for we are rarely sensible of our Condition till we begin to be fervent: This renders the Conversion of the Lukewarm almost impossible; for which Way shall one go about to persuade them that they are in such a State? Blindness is the first Effect of Tepidity.

Its Unfaithfulness being gradual, it is less sensible of them; then its Faults grow habitual, and at last it takes Pleasures in them: Nothing toucheth it when it is in this Condition, and it suspects nothing: It is not sensible of any new Fault; it grows Lukewarm without omitting one of its Devotions;

votions; 'tis the Imperfections of these verry Devotions that give Birth to its Tepidity, and help it to deceive its self, by covering its real Faults with a false Appearance of Vertue.

God himself, who so loudly alarms the Sinner, is now silent, and will not awake him, but leaves him to die in this mortal Lethargy: I will begin, says he, to cast thee out; he does not do it all at once, he throws him off by Degrees, that he may not see it: The unhappy Soul is rejected, and his Reprobation sealed, and he does not perceive it, nor is he in the least sensible of his wretched Condition.

And what Hope can he have to be cur'd? How is it possible for him to recover out of this dismal State? The Advice of his true Friends, the pious Counsels of his wise Director, and of his zealous Superiour, and the best Examples, are all ill received: By his Insensibility and Hardness of Heart he seems to be incharmed, all his Actions bear the visible Mark of certain Reprobation, and that God hath left him.

St. *Bonaventure* observes that it is an extraordinary thing to see notorious Sinners quit their Sins, and become truly penitent; but that it is very extraordinary to see a Lukewarm Soul recover. And thus we may apply the Words of *Saint Paul* in that terrible Passage, at which,

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those who grow cold, after having been fervent in the Service of God, should tremble: *It is impossible* (that is, extremely difficult) *for them who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost* preferably to many others and of the Sweetness of a spiritual Life, and of saving Truths, *if they fall away, if they grow weary of serving God, and return to their Sins, it is impossible to renew them again unto Repentance.*

But, my God, what is all this to a lukewarm Soul, unless by a Miracle of Mercy thou art pleas'd to open his Eyes, and to make him see his Dangers? He does not suspect himself of being fallen away, nor will he suspect it till thou discover it to him by an inward Light, and what will avail him to be convinced of it, unless thou givest an extraordinary Supply of Grace to recover him from that wretched state?

Let us now examine if we have no reason to fear: The Lukewarm are exceedingly curious, they will try all sorts of devotions, and therefore may possibly read his Meditation; but let them not deceive themselves, this Day of Retreat may be profitable, if we examine impartially and diligently whether this dangerous Tepidity does not influence all our Actions, whether the Sacraments are useful to us, and

and whether we grow daily less imperfect
by the Exercises of Vertue.

*Third Meditation. Of the Sentiments we
shall have at the Hour of Death. See
the third Meditation for the Month
of January and July, Pag. 56.*

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June and December.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Of HELL

FIRST POINT. *The Damn'd in Hell Suffer all the Torments that can possibly be Suffer'd.*

SECOND POINT. *The Damn'd Suffer to Eternity.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider there is a Hell, that is, a Place of Torments prepar'd for those Souls who Die in their Sins; we are so us'd to hear of Hell, that we are very little Affected with the Thoughts of it; but if we were truly sensible what Hell is, we should never think of it without more and more Horrour.

Imagine that you see in the Center of the Earth a vast and bottomless Lake of Fire and Flames, the Damn'd plung'd and rowling

ling in it, all cover'd and transpers'd with Fire, which they suck in with their Breath and which enters at their Eyes and Ears, their Mouths and Nostrils casting forth dreadful Flames, their Skins scorch'd, their Flesh, Blood, Humours, and Brains Boiling and Bubbling up with the Violence of the Burning, their Bones and Marrow all on Fire like a Piece of Iron taken red Hot out of the Furnace, all the Parts of their Body on Fire, and the Fire is every Part of it.

How glad would these Wretches be to suffer only from our Fire, notwithstanding the Horrour of being thrown into a burning Gulph; but alas! There is no Comparison between it and the Fire of Hell: My God what Torments! Ours is Lightsome, theirs is Dark; ours is an Effect of the Goodness and Bounty of God, theirs is the Product of his incens'd Omnipotence, and of the infinite Hatred he bears to Sin: 'Tis a Fire which the Almighty does all he can to render Furious and Raging; and alas! It is not their only Torment, this Fire makes them feel at the same time all Sorts of Pains.

Represent to your self a Man tormented with the Gout, or a violent Colick; what Pains does he feel? How does he cry out? How willingly would he die to put an End to his Torture? And yet he suffers only in one Part of his Body; he hath the Liberty of complaining and the Satisfaction of seeing himself pitied; what would it be if every Member suffer'd the same Torment?

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Instead of Helping him, the Standers-by
abus'd him, without suffering him to com-
plain?

In Hell the Damn'd do not only suffer the
pains to which we are subject in this Life;
they suffer all these, and infinitely more;
their Torments are Universal, Violent,
Complicated, and all Excessive; in one in-
stant they feel them all, and in the midst
of all they cannot Receive, or so much as
hope for any Ease; what would one Drop
of Water be against a whole Sea of Flames?
and yet that poor Refreshment, that No-
thing, is deny'd them.

The Sick find some Ease in tumbling and
removing from one Place to another, but the
Damn'd shall be Eternally in the Fire un-
movable as a Rock.

Yet all these dreadful Torments are no-
thing to their Despair, when they look back
on the Time that is lost, and the ill use
they have made of it. The Thoughts of
the Damn'd will be employ'd to all Eterni-
ty in calling to mind the Vanity of those
Objects which made them forget God. I
have plung'd my self into this Abyss of
Darkness, and everlasting Flames, for the
pursue of a trifling Pleasure, of an imaginary
Honour, which I could possess but a Mo-
ment, and of which I have scarce any Idea
left: Where are now all those Faints of
Glory, Greatness and Reputation, which
took up all my Time, and made me forget
Eternity?

Eternity? Where is that Fortune to which I Sacrific'd my All? Where are all those whom I Lov'd so well? Where are those whose vain Opinion, Censures, and Power I stood so much in Awe? Yet these I prefer'd to the Favour and Love of God, and for these I have lost my Soul.

The Opportunities of Salvation which he hath Abus'd, and the Reward that he hath lost, will take up the Thoughts of my Damn'd Soul to all Eternity: How easily might I have Confess'd such a Sin? God offer'd me his Love, he gave me Warning, I press'd and sollicit'd me so long, and gave me so many Years of Health since my Fall: I pass'd for a Wise Man in the World: Oh! How came I to defer my Conversion to the Hour of Death? How often have I trembled at the Thoughts of my Danger, at the Apprehension of Damnation? And yet I am Damn'd at last: I needed only have done those good Works which such a Friend, such a Companion, such a Relation, have done: I began well, it would have cost me little to persevere; and if it had cost me never so much, could I take too much Pains to avoid Damnation?

Add to these inconceivable Torments, these cruel Regrets, the irreconcilable Loss of the supreme Good, the Sense of a God irritated to Eternity, of a God lost without Recovery, lost for Ever; this is the Height and Perfection of their Misery, they never cease to be the Victims of the Divine Wrath.

Wrath and Vengeance; we must know that God is before we can be able to conceive what it is to lose him without hope: Though we are so little affected with it now, they who have lost him have other Thoughts. How insupportable will be the Remembrance that I had of a Redeemer? But I slighted the Price by which I was redeemed; that my Saviour w'd me to such a Degree, and that it is impossible for me to love him; that I am hated by him, and that he will never have any Compassion on my Misery.

O my dear Saviour, who hast suffer'd so much to recal me, who hast bought me with so great a Price, that I might not be lost, thou wilt take Pleasure to see me plung'd into this fiery Gulph, thou wilt reap everlasting Misery on me without Mercy, thou wilt be no longer my Father, nor my Saviour: No Wonder if Hell be a place of Weeping, Wailing, and Gnashing Teeth, of Despair and Woe, since the Almighty, who made the World by one Word of his Will, does all he can, seems to exert all his Power and Force to make a wretched Creature suffer.

There is a Hell, and yet there are Sinners; Christians believe there is a Hell, and yet this Hell is full of Christians.

There is a Hell, and at this very Moment an infinite Number of miserable Souls are tormented in it: 'Tis certain that many of those with whom we converse

verse, that many of those who read the
and who meditate on the Torments
Hell, will one Day be cast into those ever
lasting Flames.

And am not I like to be one of them
Divine *Saviour* ! Thou hast not bought
to destroy me, but hast not thou also shed
thy Blood for those that are lost ? That
makes me fear and tremble, but what God
will this Fear do me if I lose my Soul ? O
My good Master, I will be Sav'd whatever
it cost me : I humbly beseech thee by thy
precious Blood suffer me not to be Damn'd
what will it advance thy Glory to shut
up for ever in that Abyss of Fire and Flame
They who do go down to Hell do not praise
Name, they do not love thee there : If thou
sufferest me to fall into Hell it will only in-
ment the Number of those who hate and blas-
pheme thee. My God, I will be Sav'd, tho'
the rest of the World were Lost ; thou
would'st have me be Sav'd, I trust in thy Mer-
cy, and hope that thou wilt place me among
thy Elect.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that the Torments of Hell are
only universal, excessive, and dreadful ; they
are eternal too ; notwithstanding all this
Horror, there is no Hope that they will
either end or diminish.

What must be the Thoughts of a damned
Soul, when after infinite Millions of Years

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she casts her Eyes from that Abyſs of Eternity upon the ſhort Moment of her Life, and can hardly find it after that vaſt Number of Ages which are paſt ſince ſhe came there? ſhe, tho' conſider'd never ſo near, appears but a Moment; the Time paſt of it ſeems but an Inſtant to us who live; and when we come to die, tho' we have liv'd long, we can hardly perſwade our ſelves that there hath been any Interval between the Day of our Birth, and the preſent Day: All that is paſt ſeems a Dream, what then will it be after Death? When ſo many Millions of Years are over, when our Deſcendants for many Generations are all forgotten, when Time has ruin'd our Houſes, deſtroy'd the Cities, and overturn'd the Kingdoms where we liv'd, when the End of Ages ſhall have bury'd the whole Univerſe in its own Aſhes, and infinite Millions of Ages after?

This is dreadful, but all this is not Eternity. When a damn'd Soul ſhall have ſuffered, this while, and a hundred thouſand times much, 'tis nothing to Eternity.

Were one of the Damn'd oblig'd to fill the Hollow of a Man's Hand with his Tears, to drop but one ſingle Tear at the End of each thouſand Years, what a terrible Execution would this be? *Cain*, the firſt of the Damn'd, would have ſhed but Six or Seven Tears; *Judas* but One; but if he were oblig'd at the ſame rate to make a Brook or a River of his Tears, to fill the Sea, or the vaſt Expanse between Heaven and Earth, what a prodigious

prodigious Length of Time would this require? Our Imagination is lost and confounded in so vast a Duration; but all the great and inconceivable Extent of Time nothing to Eternity: A Time will come when every one of those wretched Souls will be able to say, One Tear for every thousand Years that I have been in Hell would have drown'd the Universe, and fill'd up the immense Space between Heaven and Earth; and yet I have an Eternity of unspeakable Torments still to suffer; all I have suffered is nothing to this Eternity; after Millions of Ages as many times multiply'd, after an extensive Duration in which our Thoughts are lost, the Fire of Hell will be as violent and fierce, the Damn'd will be capable of Torment, and as sensible of their Pains, and God as incens'd, and far from being appeas'd, as the first Moment.

Oh! Dreadful, Oh! Incomprehensible Eternity! Were we only to burn for ever for every wicked Thought as many Millions of Ages as we have liv'd Days, Hours or Minutes, our Pains would have an End at last; but we know certainly that our Torments will never end, always to suffer, and be assured that we shall always suffer, to be always thinking on the Happiness we have lost, the Torments we have brought upon ourselves, on the Means of avoiding them which we have had, to have continually before our Eyes the Vanity of every thing we have

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prefer'd to God, and the little while that our Pleasures have lasted, the unutterable Sweetness we might have tasted in his Service, the vast Difference between the Pains we fear'd in the Practice of Virtue, and those which we are now forc'd to suffer in the Flames of Hell, to have the Thoughts of this Eternity always present, and to burn, rage, and despair for ever: My God! What Misery!

If these Reflections do not Convert us, if the Prospect of those Torments, of this Eternity, does not touch us, if the Fear of this everlasting Regret does not Wean us from Sin, and from our vain Amusements, are we rational Creatures? Are we Christians?

These terrible Verities have made so many Martyrs, have Peopled the Desarts, and daily fill the Convents; what do we think of these Men? Did they do wisely? Did they do well to neglect nothing, to do all they were able, to avoid Hell?

Who would not give all he is worth to be freed from a Dungeon? Who thinks any pains too great to prolong his Life? But Oh! What do we do, nay, what do we not refuse to do to avoid Hell?

The divine Justice is terrible; God punishes those that offend him with Eternal Torments in Hell; yet we offend him in the Sight of his Hell; certainly an Eternity of Misery is not too severe a Punishment for such Malice; if there were no Hell already, God would make One on purpose for such offenders.

The Thoughts of Hell make us tremble ; we are unwilling to think of it, lest it should affright us, and yet we are not afraid to run headlong into it : We are afraid to think of the Eternal Duration of those bitter Torments, and yet we will not make one Step out of the Road that leads to them.

There is a Hell, and yet we delight in Pleasures, and Sin hath still Charms for us ; we think the Practice of Virtue difficult, and there are still careless and imperfect Religious, and debauch'd Christians : This seems as Incomprehensible as Eternity itself.

You object that Perfection is not necessary to avoid Hell ; true it is not necessary, but can you keep too far from a Lake of Fire into which so many fall ? Can you take too much Care, and too many Precautions, to preserve your self from everlasting Fire, Rage and Despair ?

How cruel must the Thoughts of a damned Soul be, who knows that he might have been eternally as Happy as he is eternally Miserable, if he had pleas'd : That he might have been a Saint with Ease, and is now because he was not pleas'd to be so : That his Brethren are in Heaven, but he is in Hell : He laugh'd at those who being afraid of the Condition in which he is now liv'd otherwise than he did ; and now what would he not do to be what they are ? I call'd a holy Exactness Melancholy, Christ

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Christian Modesty and Reservedness I call'd
Stupidity and Scrupulousness. Oh! That I
had been so Stupid, so Scrupulous and Melancholy;
that Exactness, that Reserve, has made many Saints,
who are now in Heaven absorpt in Joys; but what is become now
that I am in Flames of all my Mirth and good Humour
which I affected to shew by rallying every thing? If I had imitated
such and such of my Acquaintance, if I had made good Use
of the divine Inspirations such a Day, if I had been Faithful to
such a Grace, if I had shunn'd such an Occasion of Sin,
if I had Practic'd such a Virtue, if I had Mortify'd my self,
if I had been truly willing, I should be now in Heaven;
instead of which I am Damn'd to Eternity, I am lost,
and lost for ever. Oh terrible Regret! And that which
aggravates my Misery is the Remembrance how often I have
Thought on the Pains I now endure, on that Eternal Regret
I should one Day feel if I were Damned.

Yet after all this Men Damn themselves:
Great God! Thy Vengeance is Just, they deserve it all.

Is it possible that we can avoid thinking on Hell? Is it possible that we can think on it,
and not be Converted? Is it possible that we are
Converted, and do not continue to think on it? We must
have it always before our Eyes, after our Conversion,
to prevent our falling; the greatest Saints, those

pure Souls, whose Hearts were all Inflam'd with the Love of God, thought it absolutely Necessary for them to meditate on Hell, and the Apprehensions of it made them Tremble; and can any who pretend to Virtue, can any Religious Man imagine, that it is unnecessary to think on Hell? Certainly such Men dare not think on it; they are Conscious to themselves that they do not take Pains enough to give them Ground to hope that they shall not be Condemn'd; but have they less Cause to fear because they have a greater Account to give? And how can they hope to be less severely Punish'd because they are under greater Obligations?

Christ had good Reason to tell us that Hell is the only Evil we ought to fear; for what is Man the worse for being hated and persecuted, for being reduc'd to a mean and obscure Life, and for being Mortify'd, if he escape being Damn'd?

My God! If thou art resolv'd to punish me for my Sins, chastise me in this Life, but do not Damn me. I will satisfy thy Justice here, I will hope in thy Mercy, and will love thee; what Satisfaction will it be to thee to see me in Hell, surrounded with Flames, transported with Rage and Despair, Hating and Cursing thee, and eternally Blapheming thy Name?

My God, hast thou given me Time to think on the Pains of Hell, only to aug-

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from

for June and December. 197

ment my Despair one Day, for being damn'd after having thought on these Pains? Remember I am sprinkled with the Blood of *Jesus*, and 'tis through that Blood that I beg and hope for Mercy; thou hast paid too great a Price for me to be indifferent whether I be lost or no. I will be sav'd, suffer me not to be lost; if thou wilt punish me do it in Time, but let not my Punishment be Eternal.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Of the Fruits of Penance.

FIRST POINT. *Penance is necessary for all sorts of Men.*

SECOND POINT. *What the Fruits of that Penance ought to be.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that Mortification and Penance is the only Way to Heaven; *Jesus Christ* shew'd us no other Way; and the Saints, who from their Infancy were confirmed in Grace,

knew no other. 'Tis an Errour to imagine that Penance is necessary only for great Sinners, and no less an Errour to think that Mortification is the Vertue only of the Perfect; if we be Sinners we must do Penance to endeavour to appease the Wrath of God, and to obtain Mercy and Pardon; if we are so happy as not to have lost our Innocence, Penance is necessary for us to preserve that precious Treasure: We have sinn'd, we may sin again, two powerful Motives to do Penance.

Since we all confess that Men sin more frequently in the World, and that they are more expos'd to the Danger of offending God than in a Cloister, can we reasonably believe that Penance belongs only to Monasteries, and that none but Religious are oblig'd to Mortification? Do we consider that many of those Religious, whom we think indispensably oblig'd to do Penance, never lost their Innocence; and shall we who own our selves guilty of many Sins, and who are in danger of committing more every Moment, shall we think to perswade our selves that Mortification and Penance do not belong to us?

If we had nothing but our own Passions to overcome, could we reasonably hope to conquer them without the Exercise of Penance? And who can reasonably hope to be saved without subduing his Passions?

It is an Article of Faith that none enter into Heaven but those who do Violence to themselves; and yet we pretend to enter there without Mortification. The Life of Man upon the Earth is a perpetual Warfare; for Saint Paul tells us, That the *Desires of the Flesh are contrary to the Desires of the Spirit, and the Desires of the Spirit are contrary to those of the Flesh*; how then can we hope to be victorious without the Practice of Penance?

We please, our sensual Appetites in every thing, we are careful of our Bodies even to Excess, we follow blindly our natural Inclinations, and in this Condition we live without Fear in the midst of the World, where we are expos'd to the greatest Dangers. Certainly either we are of a different Nature from the rest of Mankind, or the Devil stands in Awe of us, and respects us, or we are confirm'd in Grace, or else we are in Danger (which is much more probable) to die in our Sins: Does Heaven cost the most fervent and generous Souls so much, and can we expect that the lazy and imperfect should gain it with less Pains?

St. Paul chastis'd his Body, he join'd a continual Penance to the cruel Persecutions he suffered, for fear of being perverted himself while he converted others: And shall Men, who dare not pretend to be any thing near as perfect as St. Paul, imagine that they have no need to practise Mortification?

Were the Saints more frail than we? Did they expect another Recompence? Did they follow another Guide? Or serve another Master? Their Lives were a continual Mortification, are ours like theirs? And can we call our selves the Disciples of *Christ* while we neglect to do Penance? Our Saviour says, If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and bear his Cross daily.

True Mortification is inseperable from true Piety; not only because no Vertue can subsist long without a constant and generous Mortification, but also because no Vertue is real that is not attended with it.

We have great Reason to distrust our Exercises of Piety, our good Works; every thing is to be suspected in those whose Passions are strong, and who are unmortify'd.

It does not seem that we are afraid of the Difficulty; we dislike the Motive; for what do we not suffer in the Service of the World? Alas! If God requir'd of his Servants all that the World exacts of those who serve it, I am afraid he would have but few Servants.

How do we constrain our selves every Day to please those whom our Interest requires us to manage? What Mortification so severe and so continual as a Courtier's, a Merchant's Intent upon his Trade, a Soldiers, or a Scholar's? Yet they are not discourag'd, they seem satisfy'd amidst all their Sufferings; but when God calls upon us to

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constrain our selves a little, every thing is uneasy, we find his Yoke heavy, Virtue frights us, we are disgusted, and the sole Thought of Mortification makes us lose Courage.

But Oh! We shall have other Thoughts on a Death-Bed; when the Image of *Jesus Christ Crucified* is presented to us, will not the Sight of it have a quite contrary Effect? It will upbraid our Delicacy, and increase our Regret for having led so lazy, so sensual a Life, for having neglected Penance and Mortification.

They present a Crucifix to the dying, but, my God, do all the dying find much Comfort in contemplating a Crucifix at their Death? Is it possible, my Dear *Jesus*, that the Mortification which thou hast render'd so easy, should seem hard and insupportable only when we are to practice it in Conformity to thy Example, and for Love of thee?

Oh! My God! What should I do, if thou hadst requir'd of thy Servants, if I were bound to do and suffer as much for Salvation, as I do and suffer to ruin my self? Thou requirest less than the World does, less than I do and suffer in its Service, and shall I refuse to do and suffer what is absolutely Necessary, for Salvation, what I have deserv'd by my Offences, and what all the blessed Spirits in Heaven have done and suffer'd, that they might imitate thee?

God forbid that I should glory in any thing but in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the World is Crucify'd to me, and I unto the World, Gal. 9. 14.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that by the Fruits of Penance is meant, not only Macerating our Bodies, but chiefly the Mortification of our Passions, and the Reformation of our Lives; these are indeed the Fruits which God expects from our Contrition and Penance; by these Marks we may know whether we have made good use of the Sacraments, and whether we be truly sorry for our Sins, and Faithful to the Grace of God.

The Exercises of Devotion, the frequenting of the Sacraments, and the Practice of good Works, are powerful Means of Perfection; but while we retain our former Passions with these powerful Means, while we are as Proud, as Impatient, as Peevish, as Envious, as Difficult to be Pleas'd, as Cholerick, as Unmortify'd, as full of Self-love, as before, can we reasonably rely on these pretended Exercises of Piety?

Mortification of the Body is an Exercise of Penance, but that Penance must have its Fruit, which consists in suppressing our Passions, in regulating our Inclinations, and in repairing the Disorders of Self-love.

To what Purpose do we confess so often, if in a whole Year's time we have not perhaps reform'd any one of the Faults that we confess? It is not enough for us to detest our Sins, we must resolve to commit them no more, and how can that Resolution be sincere if we do not likewise resolve to avoid the least Occasion of Sin? The Execution of this Resolution is properly the Fruit of Penance. In good earnest if we know the Efficacy of this Sacrament of Penance only by the Fruits we find of it in our selves, should we have a high Idea of it? It is much to be feared that our using our selves by an unaccountable Carelessness, and especially by Want of Contrition to reap no Profit by the Sacrament, will render our Disease incurable.

A Religious Life is a continual Penance but there is no Danger of its being unfruitful? What a miserable thing would it be for a Religious to have done Penance so long without any Fruit? And what Fruit can an unmortify'd Religious, who is of a Worldly Spirit, Lukewarm and Careless, receive from all his Penance? He is very much in the Wrong who bears the Cross, and will not taste the Fruits of it: He would not suffer more, nay, he would suffer much less, for those Fruits are full of true Sweetness.

It is certain that every Body has very much to suffer in this Life; we shall meet with Crosses every where, they who live
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most at their Ease are not exempted: Let us at least bear them patiently, let us unite our Sufferings with the Sufferings of *Christ*; this will not augment them, but it will make us reap Fruit by them.

Another Fruit of Penance is a constant Practice of Mortification: My God, what Fruit may we not gather from this Practice? Every thing in the World may give us an Opportunity to curb our Inclinations; there is no Place, no Time improper for it without deviating from the Rules of good Sense. Let him who loves *Jesus Christ* truly make a good Use of these little Occasions; have we a great Desire to see any Object, or to speak in some particular Occasion? We may reap great Benefit by casting down our Eyes, and holding our Tongues. If we have an Opportunity to gain Applause by saying something very seasonably, or by some witty Piece of Raillery, we have also an Opportunity of making a great Sacrifice. There is scarce an Hour wherein some Subject of Mortification does not present its self; are we sitting or standing? We may choose an uneasy Seat, or a painful Posture, without seeming to affect it. In fine, the Inconveniences of the Place, of the Season, of the Disagreeableness of the Company, border so that we seem not to mind them, and indeed little Occasions of Mortification; but the Mortification it self is not little in these small Occasions; it is very meritorious

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ous; and I may say, that the greatest Graces, and the most sublime Holiness, commonly depend upon a generous, constant, Mortification in these small Matters. A punctual Performance of the Duties of our Community, an exact Observation of our Rule, a Conformity to the common Way of living in every thing, without any Regard to our Inclinations, our Employments, or our Age, are precious Fruits of a Mortification so much the more considerable as it is less Subject to Vanity, and more conform'd to the Spirit of *Christ*.

These are the true Fruits of Penance, what hinders our bearing Abundance of them? But there is another Fruit of Penance yet more necessary, and without which all the rest will avail us little for Eternity, and that is the Reformation of our Manners, the Victory over our domineering Passion; let us observe what Passion is most powerful, which Habit is strongest, to what Sin we are most subject, which is in some manner the Source of all the rest, and of all the false Maxims we frame to our selves in Matter of Conscience. All other Sins may be Strangers to us, but the domineering Passion is our proper Character; the Fruit of a true Conversion is to retrench our reigning Vice, to conceive a Holy Detestation of that imperious Passion, to fight against it without ceasing. The Victory of this Sin alone will deliver us from the strongest Temptations:

Temptations: But we willingly attack our other Sins, and commonly spare this, and this is the true Cause of our receiving so little Benefit by our Penance.

My God, what do we stay for to become fruitful? Thou hast cultivated us with so much Care, we are planted in a Ground watered with thy Tears and precious Blood; how long shall we be unfruitful? What do we get by bringing forth only Thorns? We feel their Points, but we receive no Benefit by our Pain, because we fly from the Cross. I am resolv'd, my Dear Saviour, to neglect nothing that I may not live such a barren Life: I can do nothing without thy Grace, I can do all things with it; since thou givest me this Time for Penance, suffer me not to abuse it any more; my God, I am resolv'd to begin this Moment to bring forth Fruits worthy of Penance.

Third Meditation of the Sentiments we shall have at the Hour of Death. See the Third Meditation for the Months of January and July, Pag. 56.

Chri-

Christian Reflections.

Which may serve for Matter of Consideration for every Day of Retreat.

Of Salvation.

ARE we fully Convinc'd of the great Truths of our Religion? If we do not believe them, we do too much; but if we do believe what we profess, we do not do enough. Dare we say that the Saints did more than was needful? Tho' at the End of their Lives, when Mens Judgments are most impartial, they were troubled for having done no more. How different are our Lives from theirs? Do we indeed walk in the same Way with them? Do we govern our selves by the same Rules? And yet we pretend to arrive at the same Place. Good God! Have not we reason to fear that we are out of the Way? We admire the Wisdom of the Saints for practising what they believed; but how little does our Practice agree with our Belief? And shall we have Cause to applaud our selves on a Death-Bed for our past Lives?

Of

Of the Importance of Salvation.

What is this Salvation of which we talk so much? This Soul? This Eternity? Is it true that I am sent into the World only to secure it? Is it true that I am undone if I do not secure it, tho' I should gain the whole World? Is it true, and do I indeed believe, that the Business of my Salvation is, the greatest Business I can have? That it is indeed my only Business? That nothing else deserves my Care? That this requires all my Application, and alone depends on it? If I do not believe this I am lost for Ever: and if I do believe it, do not I deserve to be severely punish'd for my Indifference, which degenerates into a downright Contempt of Salvation? Do I apply my self to this great Business? Am I much concern'd about it? And what Ground have I to hope for Success while I take so little Pains? Should not I conclude a Man ruin'd if he minded his Temporal Business no more than I do this difficult, this important Business of Salvation?

Of our Indifference for Salvation.

Our Indifference for Salvation is so great that we must own, that of all our Affairs we neglect this most, and lay it least to Heart. Whence proceeds this unaccountable Indifference

ference for eternal Happiness? God gave us our Lives only to think on it, he judg'd them all little enough to succeed in it: Death for ought we know is very near us; what Part of our Life have we spent in this important Business? How few Years, how few Days, nay, how few Hours, have we devoted to it? Have we the Confidence to reckon those we spend in the Church with so much Distraction and voluntary Irreverence? Alas, have we made any great Progress in those Hours? Can we have the Face to mention the little time we have given to hasty Prayers without Devotion, to Confessions without Sorrow, and without Reformation, to Communion without Fruit, or to a few pretended good Works which we have lost by doing them upon natural, or which were corrupted by bad Motives.

We are so taken up with superfluous Cares and Worldly Business, that we can spare but a little Time to think of our salvation, and we grudge the little Time we spend in thinking of it. What Reason can we give for such an unreasonable Conduct, unless we will own that it proceeds from Want of Faith. If we believ'd that the enjoyment of God, that an Eternity of infinite Happiness or Misery, (which includes and surpasses all other Miseries) depended on our Diligence; if we did really believe what we repeat so often, that we cannot serve God and the World at once, that Time is short, and

and that Death approaches, that each Moment for ought we know may be our last; if we did indeed believe that Salvation is our own Work, and that we only can secure it; that it is no matter what becomes of us here if we make sure of Heaven; that we lose all, even temporal blessings, by neglecting our Souls; and that if we be truly careful of them we shall lose nothing, not even Worldly Goods; if we do seriously believe these things, how can we be careless? how can we be solicitous for any thing but Salvation?

Of the false Pretences of Worldly Men about Salvation.

'Tis very surprizing that Men of Sense and Wisdom, who reason so well about every thing else, should reason so very falsely when they are desir'd to think on, and work on their Salvation: They freely own that it is hard to secure it in the World, they will make lively and pathetic Descriptions of the Corruptions of the Age, they are very eloquent on the inevitable Dangers to which Men are expos'd in the World, and they readily conclude that they who live in the World stand in as much need of an Heroick Virtue as the Religious in their Convents; but when they are told, that in Order to Salvation it is necessary for them to overcome themselves, to mortifie their Passions, to

How the Example of *Christ* and his Saints, they pretend that these Vertues do not belong to them, that 'tis not their Business; that their Condition does not oblige them to so great a Sacrifice; and that none but Religious can live regularly, and conformably to the Maxims of *Jesus Christ*. Is it not natural to conclude from hence, that either the Work of Salvation is not a Secular Christian's Business, (which is a most gross and damnable Error) or else that Secular Christians do indeed renounce their Salvation?

Of the Facility of Salvation.

God could have put us under a Necessity of seeking him continually as our ultimate End, and of never departing from him, but he must then have taken away our Liberty; when we reflect on the vast Number of Christians who lose their Souls, we are ready to wish that he had subjected us to that happy Necessity of working out our Salvation, that so we might not be tormented with the Fear of Hell. But could we desire him to secure our Salvation better than by putting it into our own Hands? And because he has made me Master of my Destiny, of my eternal Happiness, shall I therefore be unhappy? Shall this render my Salvation doubtful? Shall this put me in greater Danger? I might have reason to be afraid if depended on another, tho' my best Friend,
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but it depends only on me by the Help of Grace, which will never be wanting to me yet this is the chief Cause of my Ruin. O my God ! If I do not secure my Salvation now that thou hast made me Master of it, must own that I deserve Judgment without Mercy, and nothing less than an eternal Punishment.

Of the ill Use of the Means of Salvation.

Can we think of our Unprofitableness under such powerful Means, of our slighting so many Graces, and rend'ring them useless to us, without apprehending lest God should say to us as the Apostle to the Jews *The Word of God was first spoken to you* *Act. xiii 46.* You were born in the Bosom of the Church, you were transplanted into the fertile Field of Religion, into a Ground cultivated by the Labours, and watered with the Sweat and Blood of him who is both God and Man. How many Means and Helps have we had to enable us to fulfil all the Duties of our Station, and make us fruitful in good Works ? But since these Means and Assistances, which were proper to have made us bring forth an hundred-fold, have been useless to us, have we not Reason to fear lest he should add, *But seeing you put that Divine Word from you and judge your selves unworthy of everlasting Life, behold we turn to the Gentiles*

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A Spiritual Retreat.

This Sentence is already executed on *Siria*, and on almost all the *East*; where Christianity first began, and a great Part of the *North*, particularly unhappy *England*. Those Nations, formerly such good Christians, and who reckon among their Ancestors so many great Saints, have in these latter Times cut themselves off from the Fold of Christ, while the *Indians*, and People of *Japan*, and many other Barbarous Nations, are enter'd into the Church, and have reviv'd the Primitive fervour and Piety, equalling the Generosity of the most glorious Martyrs.

Of Want of Faith.

Whence comes it that we make no Difficulty of believing the Mysteries of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, &c. tho' they are not only above our Understandings, but seem to shock our Reason? Is it not because these Mysteries do not Contradict our Passions? But do we believe with the same Facility the other Truths of the Gospel, the Doctrines of Self-denial, of Contempt of the World, of the Love of Poverty and Humiliation? Yet, my God, they are all grounded upon the same infallible Authority, thy holy Word, : For 'tis as certain that we shall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven if we do not deny our selves, subdue our Passions, and love our Enemies, as it is that we shall never enter there if we are not Baptiz'd:

Baptiz'd: Yet we rely very much on our Faith, for every Man pretends to be one of the Faithful, not considering that we have but a dead Faith, and that we confound the Knowledge of what we ought to believe with that true Christian Faith, which is always Fruitful in good Works, and without which there is no Virtue.

Of the Thoughts of Hell.

We believe that there is a Hell of Fire and dreadful Torments, and that one mortal Sin is sufficient to condemn a Soul to Eternal Pains; and yet are we much afraid of mortal Sin? Do we not fear Eternal Flames and Torments? Our trembling at the Thoughts of Hell shews we believe it, if the Thoughts of its Pains be so terrible, what will it be to feel them all? How great will our Despair and Anguish be when we call to mind that we would not avoid the Hell at the Thoughts of which we have often trembled?

Of a Miserable Eternity.

We talk very much of an unhappy Eternity, but do we know what it is? By often speaking of it we use our selves to the Thoughts, and so come to be very little affected with it? A Man that is accustomed to that continual Vicissitude of Seasons,

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Years, of Months and Days, amus'd by its Variety, and diverted by its Novelty, finds himself in Eternity before he is aware; and in that Instant the Soul enters into an unchangeable State; it is in the same Condition, and in the same Place, where it shall remain to all Eternity; from that first Moment it suffers the same Eternal Torments which it shall always suffer, so that every Minute it suffers an Eternity.

In this wretched Eternity all the different Parcels of Time concur and unite as in one Point to make the Damn'd Miserable; 'tis a Globe of an infinite Weight, which bears on an indivisible Point; 'tis a Duration without End. Here these unhappy Creatures suffer all the Torments which the Omnipotence of God can inflict; they suffer them all at once without any Intermission, and they suffer them all perpetually without any Hope of Ease, without any Hope that their Torments shall ever End, or they grow less sensible of them. My God, how dreadful is this! If these Pains were to end after as many Millions of Ages as there have pass'd Moments since the Creation of the World, if every sinful Thought were to be punish'd only with an Hundred Millions of Ages in Hell, and a momentary Act of Sin with a Thousand Times as many, the Sinner's Madness would be more tolerable, tho' incapable of Excuse; tho' they lasted long, they would at length have an end; but to be everlasting, to be
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always suffering and burning, and certain to suffer and Burn for Ever without any Diminution, my God! What Excess of Misery!

Suppose a Soul condemn'd to the Flame of Hell till he had fill'd this Chamber with Tears, at the Rate of one Tear in a Thousand Years, what a terrible Extent of Time must he suffer? *Cain* has not yet shed above Five or Six; but how much more requir'd to fill the House? yet more to make several great Rivers, yet more to fill the Sea, and infinitely more to drown the whole Universe, and fill the Space between Heaven and Earth: Our Imaginations are confounded and lost in such a vast Duration the Thoughts Stuns us; yet alas, this, tho' so Terrible and Inconceivable, is not Eternity; it is not so much as a Part of Eternity for after all this Time is past Eternity will be still entire; and a Time will come when every Damn'd Soul shall be able to say that he might have fill'd and drown'd the whole Universe by shedding one Tear for every Thousand Years that he has been in Hell, and yet he is still to undergo a whole Eternity of Sufferings; that dismal Eternity is not yet diminish'd one Moment. Can we yet find Satisfaction in unlawful Pleasures? Can we delight to Sin? Can Sin have any Charm for us?

My Gracious God! My Good Master
My Loving Saviour! Do not Damn me,
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for I know thou wilt not condemn me till I have by my repeated Infidelities and Sins renounc'd my Title to eternal Happiness. Am I worthy to be the Object of thy incens'd Wrath, of so long and so severe a Vengeance? O my Soul! Arise and work, do all that is required of thee to be saved; while it is in thy Power save thyself, tho' all the rest of the World perish: This is a terrible Truth, but it is a certain Truth. We can never comprehend this Eternity of Torments, but we can much less comprehend how a Sinner can believe it, and yet live in Sin. Are we afraid to think of Hell? 'Tis true, the Thoughts of it have made the Stoutest tremble, and the greatest Saints quake; but will our not thinking of it take it away, or render it less terrible? Will our not thinking of it make us have less Reason to fear Damnation?

The Fire of Hell is indeed dreadful; yet an eminent Servant of God observes that it is slight in Comparison of the Stings of Conscience, of the Remembrance of what is past and of the Time they have mispent; their Thoughts will be eternally taken up with lively Ideas of the Vanity of all those things which drew them away from God, and they will incessantly call to mind how easily they might have been saved, how easily they might have confess'd such a Sin, and have avoided such an Occasion of falling. How many Years of

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Health did I enjoy after my Fall? Why did I defer my Conversion to a Death-Bed? Where was all the Wisdom for which I valued myself so much? I who was thought a judicious Man, and capable of advising others well: I needed only to have done what such and such have done, it depended only on me, I often design'd and resolv'd to do it, but I have not done it. Oh! That I had made these Reflections while I might have been the better for them: Alas! I did make them, but unprofitably; I might have been a Saint if I would, I would not, and am therefore justly Damn'd.

Of the pretended Conversion of the Imperfect.

Men Consecrated to the Service of God are often very little touch'd with Discourses of the Necessity of being converted without Delay, because they look upon themselves as perfectly converted ever since they contracted at their Entrance into Religion a greater Obligation to be thoroughly converted; but they do not consider that it is easier to change their State than their Manners, that a new sort of Dress is not capable of subduing their Passions, nor of extirpating their vicious Inclinations; this new Form of Life, this outward Change, dazzles them at first, their Passions are charm'd by its Novelty; the Grace of God, which always

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abounds at such a time, excites some good Desires in the most Imperfect ; in those happy Beginnings every thing seems easy to them; but it is this that so often deceives Beginners, they take the common Effects of Change and Novelty for the Effects of Grace ; they are so satisfy'd with their imaginary Progress in the Beginning, that they perswade themselves the Work is done, that they have nothing to fear, and thus they lull themselves in a false Security ; but when Custom has inur'd them to this new Course of Life, when the Charms of Novelty are over, then their Passions revive with greater Strength, and are so much the more violent, in that they find nothing to amuse them, and that they have lain still, and have been curb'd so long : Then their first Inclinations return, their natural Temper gets the upper Hand, and they being careless and secure, it is easy to imagine the Ravage which such dangerous Enemies make in a Soul that is not upon its Guard. And this is the Cause that so many Religious are found more unmortify'd, more greedy of Pleasures, more fond of Honours, less sensible of the eternal Truths of our Religion, less faithful to the Grace of God, and much more imperfect, after three or four Years, than they were the first Day of their Conversion.

Of the false Idea which many frame to themselves of Vertue.

There is certainly some Vertue among the greatest Part of Christians, but it is very much degenerated from the Vertue of the first Ages of the Church; it is a pliable complaisant Vertue; it has so much of God as serves to gain a Reputation, and to make it self esteemed; it always finds out a Medium between the Maxims of *Christ* and those of the world; and therefore it is positively condemn'd by *Jesus Christ*, and hath nothing but the Name of Vertue. My God, these half Christians are very unhappy while they endeavour to please both God and the World; they never please Men, and always displease God. Their Maxim is, that we must be well bred, that we must have an easy indulgent Vertue, which agrees with what they call good Sense, as if the Spirit and Maxims of *Christ* were contrary to good Sense. My God, how directly opposite is this pretended Vertue to the Gospel? And what Abundance of Souls does it ruin? Who perswade themselves that they need not be so recollected, so exact, so modest, that they are Men, and must live like Men, while they converse with them; yes, you are Men, but remember you are Christians, Church-men, or Religious.

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Of the little Progress we make in Virtue.

We should be very much ashamed to own our selves, or to be thought as ignorant after Ten and Twenty Years Study of the Sciences, as we were the first half Year, and much more ashamed to have it thought that we are contented to be so; and yet how many, who make Profession of Piety, whose great Business it is to become perfect, are not ashamed to confess, and to have it believ'd, that they would think themselves happy, if after as many Years Study in the Sublime Science of Salvation, they were but as fervent, as mortified, and as near being Saints, as when they were but six Months converted? They do indeed strive to banish those Thoughts by giving themselves up to the insipid Pleasures of a careless Life, but sooner or later Death will come, and what will their Thoughts be then?

Of the proper Virtues for every Condition.

It would be a great Imprudence, and a dangerous Error, in Directors to exhort all the World alike to the same Degree of Perfection, and to conduct them by the same Methods: There are many Mansions, many Places, and divers Orders, in the Kingdom of God; and tho' all the Inhabitants of the Heavenly Jerusalem are fully content, and

perfectly happy, yet they possess different Degrees of Glory; there are Seraphims and Angels; and they who are not worthy of the same Rank with the Apostles, the Martyrs, and the Virgins, may have a Blessed Place among the Penitents. As all do not receive the same Measure of Grace in this Life, so neither do they receive the same Weight of Glory in the next; but it is no less dangerous under this Pretence to confine our Desires and Designs within the narrow Bounds of an ordinary Virtue, when perhaps we have been favour'd with extraordinary Graces, and are call'd to a State which requires great Perfection. 'Tis true, all cannot be equally perfect, but all are called to be Saints; and he that would be a Saint must acquire and practice every Virtue proper to his Station; the same Perfection is not requir'd of all in the same Station; but the more perfect our State is, the greater Perfection is requir'd of us; that Virtue which may be sufficient for a Layman is not sufficient for a Religious; they who are called to Apostolical Functions are indispensably oblig'd to a more sublime Virtue; and God requires a greater Sanctity in Priests than in those who are not ordain'd.

Of the World.

Worldly Men render themselves Objects of Pity when they endeavour to perswade us that they are happy; tho' they should always dissemble their Vexations and Discontents,

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tents, yet no Man who knows of what Sort of People the World is compos'd, and what it requires of those that serve it, can believe a Worldling happy. It is compos'd of Men who love nothing but themselves, who think no Law so inviolable as their own Interests and Pleasures; 'tis a confus'd Medley of People of different Characters and Inclinations; where each Man, full of himself, is contented only with what he likes, and likes only what pleases him: One (says an Holy Man) is puff'd up with a vain Title, which he dishonours by his Actions; another is proud of his rich Cloaths, which are yet unpaid for; this Man values himself upon another's Merit, that Man frets and pines away with Vexation because the World has not as good an Opinion of him as he has of himself; others break their rest to heap up Riches, of which they have no need, of which afterwards they make no use. When they have ruin'd their Health to get an Estate, they spend this Estate to recover their Health; they must be always on the Watch against Envy and Jealousie, against the Surprizes of this Competitor, and the other Enemy; they suspect all the World, and indeed there are but few real Friends to be found in it.

What Abundance of Pains are daily lost in serving the World? When you have labour'd with all the Earnestness and Dili-

gence imaginable in its Service, if you are unsuccessful it gives you no Thanks, you lose its Favour, you shall be whole Years unfortunate without knowing it, and upon the first Appearance of a Fault it decries and disgraces you, and values you no more. It is not sufficient to serve diligently and well, unless you have found the Secret to please, which frequently does not depend on us; nay, which is yet more strange, they who would not displease the World must not seem desirous to please; if it once discovers that they have that Design, it thinks it self exempt from all Obligation: It neither rewards the Services of those who are not zealous enough for its Interest, nor the Care and Pains of those who make it their whole Business to gain its Favour.

Do you rely upon your Friends in the World; while you are powerful, and in a Capacity of obliging many, you will never want a great number of Friends, but the Moment you fall into Disgrace, the Moment you are no longer capable of serving them, those pretended Friends all disappear, and apply themselves only to him that succeeds you: And tho' you were never so much a Slave to a great Man, he thinks it a sufficient Reward for all your Services to send some Footman to enquire how you do when you are on your Death Bed.

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How desirous are we to be taken Notice of? But how can we expect to distinguish our selves among such a Multitude of Pretenders, who all think themselves endow'd with some excellent Quality, with some extraordinary Merit? What is this Admiration of which we are so fond? (saith the Holy Man before-cited) Do you know that wise Men admire nothing? That weak Men don't admire what deserves it most, because it is above their Reach, and they are incapable of judging? Those Qualities which you think deserve most Admiration seem very indifferent to others; they have as great an Opinion of their own Wisdom, Vertue, and Capacity, as we have of ours; we think they are partial to themselves, and they judge the same with us.

Yet the World is sometimes very free of its Praises, because it sees every Body desirous of them; but if we reflect a little, we shall find that those great Marks of Esteem, those extraordinary Praises, are the very same Words of Course which we use every Day to those whom we esteem least. Have we not observ'd that they who are most lavish of their Praises to a Man's Face, are the first that speak ill of him when they are at Liberty to vent their Thoughts. Can we have so little Sense as to imagine that we are the only Persons to whom Men speak sincerely, and that altho' they praise all the rest of the World, either out of Raillery,

or at best out of Civility and Custom, yet they are in earnest when they praise us? Many believe that all the World admires them, when indeed all the World pities them. They perswade themselves that all their Actions are taken notice of to their Advantage, because they do not consider that every Man's Thoughts are taken up with himself, and that he whom they think their Admirer fancies that they admire him.

Add to these the many cruel Troubles and Vexations which Men feel continually, but are forc'd to dissemble; how often, in order to keep up their Reputation, are they oblig'd to spend more than their Revenue? How often do they find their Fortunes decaying, and yet dare not moderate their Expence? They are forc'd to laugh when their Hearts are ready to break: The whole World is nothing but Outside and Grimace, and he passes for the happiest Man who can dissemble his Grievs best.

'Tis the Desire of Liberty that ordinarily engages Men in the World; but can Men be in a greater Subjection and a more absolute Dependence? Not only in the Army, but in Business, in every Profession, we are continually subject to the Humours and Will of others.

Certainly a Worldling is the uneasiest Man living, but it is his own Fault; he may render his Troubles meritorious if he will;

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he need not suffer so much to be a great Saint if he would but suffer for God; Yes, my God, the greatest Part of Christians would think thy Yoke insupportable if they were bound to do half so much to please thee as the World exacts of them; they are certainly in the wrong not to make use of those plentiful Means of Sanctification which they all have; they need not go out of their own Station to find Opportunities of meriting very much. They are incessantly complaining of the Vanity of the World, yet they are every moment engaging themselves farther among those Vanities, and grow every Hour fonder of them.

Of the Confidence we ought to have in the Merits of Christ.

The Consideration that the Merits and Satisfaction of *Christ* belong to us is a solid Ground of Confidence; let our Wounds be never so dangerous we have a certain Cure for them; tho' we were more in Debt to the Divine Justice than we are, tho' our Debts be never so great, we are in a Condition to pay them all, for we find in the Merits of *Christ*, and in his precious Blood, a Treasure that infinitely surpasses them; he had no need of them for himself, he hath bestow'd them on us; so that though we should have been so unhappy as to have committed the most heinous Crimes, tho'

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we saw the most terrible Effects of the Divine Wrath ready to fall on us, if we can but make one single Act of true Reliance on the Satisfaction of *Jesus*, and offer it up to thee my God, we shall no longer need to fear our own Sins, nor thy Wrath, being shelter'd from them by our Saviour's Cross, and wash'd with his precious Blood, the Merits of which he is pleas'd to apply to us.

Of our Indifference to please God.

When we value any one's Friendship, we endeavour (says an Eminent Servant of God) to acquire and preserve our selves in his Favour by a thousand Services, by shewing all the Respect and Zeal imaginable, even in things to which our Duty does not absolutely oblige us, and by avoiding every thing which may in the least displease him. The Fear of Punishment keeps us from attempting the Life of the Man we hate; we do neither Good nor Harm to those whom we think below our Notice; but when we deliberately and frequently affront a Man, 'tis an evident Sign that we neither value his Love, nor fear his Hatred; and if we do not offer him the highest Injuries, 'tis not because we care for his Aversion, but because we fear his Power; They who abstain only from great Sins, and allow themselves a Liberty in every thing else, have Reason to fear that

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Charity is absolutely extinguish'd in their Hearts: And if they will examine themselves they shall find that it is only the Apprehension of the Severity with which God punishes heinous Sins that keeps them from committing them: They would willingly displease him if the Sight of Hell did not stop them; they wish with all their Hearts they might sin without Punishment. This is a fearful Disposition, yet it is the Disposition of those who indulge themselves in deliberate *Venial Sins*: God hath no Share in the Motives that make them abstain from great Crimes, and therefore he is not obliged to assist them; which renders it exceeding difficult for a Man who desires to avoid only *Mortal Sins*, to be long free from them.

Of Confession.

Though the *Sacrament of Penance* is an easy and efficacious Remedy for all the Diseases of the Soul, and a certain Means to obtain the Pardon of all our Sins, nothing is more easy than to declare all our Sins to a Priest, who represents *Christ* with a true and sincere Sorrow for having offended our Good and Gracious God who has lov'd us so well. To what Purpose do we confess our Sins if we are not sorry for them, and resolve to sin no more? As it is easy, so it is efficacious, because all the Merits of the Son of God are apply'd to us by this Sacrament.

ment. But whence is it that we receive no more Benefit by this Divine Remedy? Never were Confessions more frequent, never was there less Amendment; Custom brings us to Confession, and Custom makes us return to the Sins we have confess'd, as if we had no other Design in frequenting the Sacrament but to grow familiar with our Sins. If our Confessions be insincere, we seem to have a Design of rendring our selves more criminal by our Confessions: We want Contrition, we content our selves with a slight and superficial Sorrow, especially when our Interest invites us to continue in our Sins, or when we fancy they are common and small ones; we want Resolution and vigorous Purposes of Amendment; we content our selves with designing to commit the same Sins no more, but we will not avoid the Occasions that have made us fall, which is a clear Proof that our Contrition is not sincere. Are we ignorant that the Want of Contrition is a grievous Sin? Or if we do know it, and pretend to strive to raise it in our Souls, it is much to be fear'd that the Confessions of many are null for all that because the Motive of this pretended Contrition is often only the Fear of being guilty of Sacrilege; and hence it is that as soon as our Confession is over, and we are no longer in Danger of committing Sacrilege, we relapse again into the same Faults as if we had never confess'd them: A Man of Sense who

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has seriously weigh'd the Reasons on both Sides, is not easily perswaded to change his Design; and can we imagine that our frequent Falls were preceded by a sincere Resolution to sin no more? Had we no Motives to make that Resolution? If God was indeed our Motive, why did we so soon change our Minds? Did we take that generous Resolution upon weak Motives? Since our Motive subsists still, why do we not continue in the same Design? We ought certainly to make but very little Account of those Confessions that are not follow'd with Amendment. My God, how will the Remembrance of such Confessions trouble and torment us when we come to die? One visible Mark of true Contrition is, when we hate the Occasions of Sin as much as Sin itself, when we do indeed abhor the smallest Sins.

Of private Friendship.

St. Basil teaches us that there should be a perfect Union between all the Religious of the same Community, but no particular Friendships; tho' such private Engagements may seem very innocent, they are a formal Separation from all the rest of the Body; who loves one of his Brethren more than the rest, shews by that Preference that he does not love the others perfectly, and thereby he offends and wrongs the whole Community.

nity; these private Unions (adds the same Saint) are a continual Seed of Discord, of Envy and Suspitions, of Distrust and Hatred; they give Occasion to Divisions, to secret Meetings and Cabals, which are the Ruin of Religion. In those Meetings one discovers his Designs, another vents his rash Judgments, a third complains, and a fourth reveals what he ought to keep secret; hence proceed Murmurings and Backbitings, uncharitable Censures, and undutiful Reflections upon Superiours; and by an unhappy Contagion these ill Dispositions communicate themselves from one to another and indeed the Devil has no Temptation more dangerous and more capable of perverting the most fervent, especially young Men, than these particular Friendships. As soon as one of these Friends is vex'd, and thinks himself ill us'd, all the rest share in his Discontent; he gives his Passion vent, and they approve it either out of Complaisance, or a turbulent Humour. By this means they break their Rules, and to shew their Friendship, act contrary to their Duty: If such Engagements were only between the most virtuous, yet they ought not to be suffer'd, because they are particular. But they are seldom found among the truly virtuous, they are too opposite to real Piety, and are almost peculiar to the imperfect. Observe a careless, lazy Religious, you will soon find him seeking some particular Friendship, contrary

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contrary to the true Spirit of Charity and Religion. St. Ephrem tells us, that *those Unions and private Conferences are very prejudicial to the Soul*, and are great Obstacles to true Piety; they destroy insensibly the Spirit of Devotion, and make the Soul weary of Pious Conversation; they inspire a secret Aversion for the fervent, and render their very Presence uneasy; 'tis in these particular Friendships that the best Resolutions miscarry, in these the noblest Sentiments which the Soul had entertain'd in Prayer, at the Communion, and at Mass, are lost. In these all the charitable Remonstrances of Superiours, and the saving Counsels of Directors, are rendred useless, either by turning them into Raillery, or by advancing Maxims directly contrary to the Spirit of Jesus Christ. There are few Virtues Proof against those Occasions: Alas! How many who had begun well have split upon this Rock, and been at last miserably ruin'd by these dangerous Engagements with their false Friends? Therefore this Saint advises carefully to avoid such particular Friendships, to lay this down as a Principle, that in Religion we must have no such Intimacy with any; our Friendships must be only Spiritual; not built like those Friendships upon Flesh and Blood, or any other Humane Considerations, but founded only on God.

Of the Happiness of a Religious Life.

How great is your Satisfaction, O Religious Souls, if you have given your selves without any Reserve to Christ; you must be very unhappy if you be not content with so good a Master. Every Step you make in weaning your Hearts from worldly Objects, that you may fix them more absolutely on him, will be an Addition to your Happiness. All you have to fear is lest some Part of your Joy should proceed from that natural Peace and Tranquility which a Life undisturb'd with Cares and Noise affords; for then it would be a false Joy: You must seek the Cross, you must chuse and love that Cross which is most uneasie to you, and most thwarts your Inclinations; you may easily find such a Cross every Day in your Convent, you will continually meet with something that contradicts your Humour, or displeases your Fancy; you ought to be watchful to make good use of these precious Opportunities of renouncing your own Judgment and Will in all Things; without this Submission your Peace is imperfect and will soon be at an End. 'Tis a solid Happiness to live in a Society where such perfect Piety and so much Virtue reigns, tho' the truly fervent Soul who seeks only God would not be the worse altho' there were less Piety in his Community, because

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he is so taken up with watching over and correcting his own Faults, that he has no Leisure to mind other Mens: Every thing helps those who have a good Intention; the bad Examples, which corrupt the weak, are so many Encitements to increase his Love to his Redeemer, that he may repair their Negligence by his Fervor, and by a holy Fear preserve himself from imitating them. Yet it is a great Advantage to be surrounded with good Examples, to have always those excellent Models before our Eyes to stir us up to Diligence, and to make us ashamed when we begin to languish. We shall always find such Examples in numerous Convents; but if we have not Living Examples, let us profit by the Dead; to this End it will be very useful to read frequently and carefully the Lives of those of your Order, who by the Practice of the Duties of your Vocation arriv'd to an Eminent Degree of Sanctity: But here you must have your Superiours Leave, for you had better do nothing than undertake any thing without their Approbation; if they give you Leave, you should be careful to observe in your Reading by what Ways and Methods those Holy Souls arriv'd through the Grace of Christ to such a Degree of Perfection; and you will find, that having the same Graces, you may easily practice the greatest Part of what they did. I have but one thing more to add, but it is very essential,

essential, and I pray God it may never be out of your Thoughts; for I am sure, if you observe it, you will find the Satisfaction of it all the rest of your Life: Remember you enter'd into Religion only to save your Souls, and to prepare for the Account you must give to God when he shall think fit to call you: This ought to be your only Care; you will be examin'd how you have kept your Vows, and observ'd your Rule; be always ready to answer. Let others live as they please, 'tis none of your Business; it is a dangerous Temptation to trouble your selves with other Mens Actions, it is enough for you to know what is requir'd of you; to be perswaded that whatever your Superiours command, whether you think it reasonable or no, provided it be not sinful, is indeed the Will of God, this is as certain as the Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament. For that very thing which you dislike is most infallibly in your Circumstances the Means which God judges most proper for your Sanctification: A Superiour may govern ill, but it is most certain that God governs you well by his Means; think seriously of this, for if you do not absolutely lay down this Principle, you lose all your Time. A Religious Life is nothing but Obedience: No Obedience can be meritorious that is not render'd to God in the Person of those whom he has set in his Place; and they

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who dispute, examine and condemn their Orders, do not consider God in them. If the Spirit of God dwell in us, he will give us the Simplicity of a little Infant, who thinks every thing good and reasonable; he will inspire us with that celestial Prudence which sees God in every thing, which finds him in all Persons, even in those who have least Virtues, and but few of the natural or supernatural Qualities which represent him. The greater your Parts are, the more submissive you ought to be, because there is nothing more reasonable and more advantageous, than to be govern'd by God in what Manner or by what Person soever he signifies his Will; we cannot begin too soon after our Entrance into Religion to love Poverty; we shall find an inexpressible Satisfaction to be able to tell our Saviour, my Dear Saviour, I have nothing but thee; I have no Affection to any of those things which I have Leave to use; if I should find my Heart inclin'd to any thing but thy self, I would keep that thing no longer; my God, what a Satisfaction is it to die with a Crucifix before us, after having liv'd in Conformity to a Crucify'd Saviour?

Of

*Of the Confidence we ought to have in Jesus
Christ present in the Eucharist.*

It is our Want of Confidence in Christ that hinders our profiting by his Presence in the Holy Sacrament, for he does not dwell among us to no purpose; but our Faith is so weak, and we have Recourse to him so very seldom, that it is no Wonder if we receive no more of those enlight'ning Graces and Blessings which he communicates to those who seek him as their Master, and who come to him as to the Fountain of all Perfection. It is no Wonder that the Devil omits no Invention to keep Christians from frequent Communion, and to disgust them with it, or at least to make them have an Indifference for our Saviour in that adorable Sacrament; for he knows that as Love for Jesus in that Holy Mystery is the Source of all Good, and of all Graces, so the Neglect of it is commonly the Cause of all the Evil that we suffer.

Of true Fervour.

It is much to be fear'd that we often take the Privation of sensible Affections for a Want of Fervour, and look upon interior Consolations as a Mark of it; by which means, as soon as we find our selves dry and arid, we lose Courage, and commit

Faults

faults, which we take no Care to correct speedily, and from thence we degenerate into Tepidity.

Besides, we are apt to imagine that to live as holily as when we were full of Devotion, we must needs endeavour to recover the same Ardour that we have lost; but it is just the contrary; we must begin with humbling and mortifying our selves as if we were warm'd with sensible Graces; it is not our Fervour that renders us humble, charitable, regular, and mortify'd, it is a generous Exercise of Humility, Charity, Regularity, and Mortification; it is a constant Practice of these Vertues that makes us fervent as we ought to be: This is a very important Lesson; which if we would study well, and practise often, we should soon find our selves very much advanced in the Way to Perfection.

Of Voluntary Poverty.

My God, when shall I be sensible of the Happiness of Poverty? When shall I love it as well as thou lovest those who practise it? What will a Vow of Poverty avail us if we are continually disturb'd with Fears of being reduc'd to Want, if we are unwilling to feel what it is to be poor? If we will needs be sure to want for nothing as the Rich themselves, who would not be Poor at such Rate? What Merit can we pretend before
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God from a convenient Poverty? Wherein we are often better provided for than we were before we vow'd to be poor, and in which we want for nothing.

Of Aridity in the Exercises of Piety.

We are much in the Wrong to disquiet and torment our selves for want of Consolations, and tender Affections in Prayer; to labour after sensible Gusts in Receiving, and in other Duties; while we neglect little Faults, and small Observances, and let slip the Occasions of denying our selves, of subduing our Wills, of conquering our Fear of Men, and of humbling our selves before the World; if we were wise these things would take up all our Thoughts, and we should not make the least Step towards pleasing our Fancies in spiritual Exercises; indeed 'tis only pleasing our Fancies, for the true Way of performing our Devotion well is humbly and patiently to suffer that Aridity, and the Deprivation of that pretended Fervour, of which we are naturally so fond, and which the true Love of God despises and rejects with all its Force.

Of the Facility with which we ingage our selves in the World.

We readily confess that they whom God calls particularly to his Service are happy
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that being free from the Vexations to which Men who live in the World are expos'd, they enjoy a sweet Peace and Tranquility of Conscience, which is the ordinary Fruit of Virtue: How often do the greatest Worldlings own that a Religious Man is happy? Yet no sooner does a young Man design to quit the World, and to embrace this happy State, but he meets with a Multitude of Obstacles from his Friends and Relations, who suggest to him that he ought to spend some Years in trying the Truth of his Vocation; they make a lively Description of what he must expect to suffer in the State of Life which he designs to follow, and they exaggerate all the Difficulties of it: One would think by their Tears that he was going to make himself unhappy, or at least to hazard his Life and his Soul too. But if he has a Mind to continue in the World, they did not think so many Precautions necessary, nor do they require so much Time to resolve; they know this Vocation is much more perillous, yet they do not exact so long a Trial, instead of aggravating the Difficulties, they study to disguise them, and to palliate those real Evils which they cannot hide; with what Pleasure do they see an only Son of great Hopes engage himself in the World? They never trouble themselves to enquire whether he has thought sufficiently of it; on the contrary, they fear nothing so much as his entertain-

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ing the Design of leaving it; what can be the Cause of this? Can Salvation be better secur'd in the World? No, certainly; but the true Reason is, that Salvation is generally the last thing Men think of, when they are deliberating what Course of Life to chuse.

Of the false Idea's which Men have of Holiness.

'Tis exceeding strange; every Man considers Holiness with Reference to the Station in which he is not; and but few apply themselves to acquire that Holiness which is proper to their own Station; the Poor are taken up with thinking on the Opportunities the Rich have to be Sav'd; and the Rich are perswaded that it is an easy Matter to sanctifie ones self, when one is free from the Obstacles that proceed from Wealth; the Young think no Season so proper to work out their Salvation as old Age: Youth (say they) is a time of Pleasure, we will think of Salvation another time; and the Aged continually regret the Means of Sanctification which they enjoyed in their Youth, and find themselves incapable of many good Works which they could have done then. Seculars place Holiness in the Austerities peculiar to a Religious Life, and from thence conclude their Condition unfit for it; and the Religious often lose Courage in the

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Way of Perfection which they have chosen, because they consider Sanctity only in Hair-shirts and Sackcloth, and in those Heroick Actions which we admire in the Lives of some great Saints. And thus, by framing a false Idea of Holiness, the greatest Part of Christians are disgusted with it, and live as if there were no Sanctity proper for their Station. My God, how many Mischiefs proceed from this Mistake?

Of the Sanctity proper for every Station.

Every Man should examine what Sanctity is requir'd of him in the station to which God hath called him; *The Will of God is that we should be Saints*; but we shall never be Saints if we are not exact in the Discharge of those particular Duties which belong to our Condition. The Virtue requir'd of a General is not proper for a Tradesman; the Duties of a Magistrate, or of a Master of a Family, are very different from those which God expects from an Hermit; that Virtue which is proper for Seculars will not suffice for Religious Men; even their Perfection has different Degrees; the Virtue of a Beginner differs exceedingly from that which God exacts from the most Perfect; the surest and most efficacious Way to be a Saint is to seek Perfection only in our Station. It is for this End that the Church sets before us the Examples of great Saints of all Ages

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and Conditions; the wise Woman whom the Scripture celebrates with so much Applause, became a Saint in looking after her Family; St. *Louis* upon the Throne, St. *Isidore* at the Plough, St. *Elzear* at Court, and by the Help of that Grace which is never wanting to us, every Man may, if he will, arrive to the Perfection of his State and Calling.

Of small Faults.

He who despiseth little Things shall fall by Degrees, saith the Author of *Ecclesiasticus*: Upon which an Eminent Servant of God remarks, that the Doctrine contain'd in those Words is of great Importance to all the World, especially to those who aspire to Perfection; for great Matters recommend themselves, so that we are naturally more careful and exact in them; but little Things are easily neglected, because we think them of no Consequence; but we deceive our selves, the Danger is greater than we imagine; it is this Negligence in those small Things that has hindred so many from becoming eminently Virtuous and Perfect in their Station. S. Bernard observes that *they who commit the most horrid Impieties begin at first with little Faults*. No Man is excessively wicked on a sudden; the Diseases of the Soul are like those of the Body, contracted by degrees; if a little Cold, a light Indisposition,

position, had been taken in time when it was so easy to cure it, the dying Man had been now in perfect Health ; so when you see a Servant of God fall into some scandalous Sin, you may be sure (adds that great Saint) that this is not his first Fault ; it is rare to see a Man who has preserv'd the Piety of an innocent Life for a great while together suddenly commit a grievous Sin ; if he had taken a little Care at first he might easily have prevented the Progress of Sin ; but because Men despis'd the Danger while it is small, because they slight and indulged themselves in little Imperfections, hence proceed the terrible Falls of those who had liv'd so well before.

The Consideration that so many Souls are ruin'd by such small Beginnings is sufficient to make us wonder and tremble. Would to God Men were thoroughly perswaded of this important Truth, on which depends the Salvation, or at least the Perfection of the greatest Part of Mankind. The Devil is too cunning to tempt a Servant of God to a Violation of an essential Duty, at first he would have but small Success if he began with soliciting a fearful Soul to commit a *Mortal Sin*, and therefore he insinuates himself by such small things till he hath got Footing before the Soul perceives it : These Infidelities in small things are always punish'd with the Loss of some Grace, and by the Loss of that Grace it is depriv'd

of many others, without which it will certainly yield to Temptations in some Occasions. This made St. Gregory say, *That little Faults are in some respect more dangerous than great ones.* And St. Chrysostome speaks thus on the same Subject, *Tho' the Proposition appear extraordinary and unheard of, yet I am not afraid to tell you that sometimes it seems to me that we ought to take more Care of avoiding small than great Faults.* The Enormity of these fills us with Horrour, but we easily grow familiar with the others, because we think them inconsiderable: And after all this, shall we neglect these little Faults of which the Saints were more afraid than of heinous Sins? *It matters not (says St. Augustine) whether the Ship be sunk by the Violence of the Waves, or by the Negligence of the Mariners, in not pumping out the Water that enters at a small Leak.* And he adds in another Place, *You are upon your Guard against great Sins, but what have you done to preserve your self from little ones? Don't you fear them? Have a care, lest after having thrown your heavy Lading overboard to lighten your Ship, lest after having renounc'd every thing that seem'd considerable at your Entrance into Religion, the Sand in the Hold sink it; have a care, lest after having escap'd the Violence of the Storms in the tempestuous Sea of the World; when you are just ready to enter into the Port of Religion, have a care lest you perish upon little Banks of Sand which seem'd nothing,*

nothing, and which you neglected to shun. The greatest Graces are commonly the Fruit of Fidelity in little things, which is it self the Effect of a greater Degree of Love to God; if we deprive our selves by our Coldness, and Want of Care of those extraordinary Helps, of those singular Favours, which inspire so much Courage against the strongest Temptations; and which are so necessary in many Cases, how often shall we be in doubt whether we have not consented to Temptation? What a great Advantage should we find at such a difficult time, in having given our selves wholly to God, and having thereby merited his special and free Help, by which we are sure to be enabled to resist all the Efforts of the Tempter, and without which we shall not only be expos'd to Dangers, but we shall perhaps be overcome?

Of Fidelity in little things.

He that is faithful in little things will be faithful also in great things, and indeed none but great Souls have this Fidelity. They are indeed little things in themselves; but it is no little thing to be faithful to God in the smallest Matter; yet this Fidelity will be worth nothing if we be negligent in greater things; but we must own that this Fidelity in little things is very great and noble; if we love much, we shall

neglect nothing that we know is pleasing to those we Love.

God did not chuse the stoutest and boldest *Israelites* to overcome the *Madianites*; one of the greatest Victories the Children of *Israe* ever won was gain'd by *Three Hundred Men* who did not kneel down to drink in the River. What seems of less Consequence than the holding up one's Hands? Yet the Victory over the *Amalekites* depended so absolutely on the lifting up *Moses Hands* to Heaven, that whenever he held them down the Enemy prevailed. What do you mean, *Joash*, cry'd the Prophet *Elisha*, to smite the Earth but three times? If you had smote it five or six times you should have been Master of all *Syria*, and have utterly destroy'd your Enemies. How slight was the Ceremony on which depended the taking of *Jericho*, (O what a Mock would our half Devotes, who despise small things, have made of it!) When the Walls went down before the People of God?

In fine, 'tis sufficient that *Jesus Christ* assures us that *Heaven*, Eternal Happiness, and *God* himself is the Reward of Fidelity in little things.

Of the Source of our Imperfections.

Though the greatest Part of Christians pretend to aspire to Perfection, yet very few attain it, because they are not really willing to be perfect; they readily believe the Do-

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doctrines of the Gospel, and the important Maxims, upon which all true Piety is grounded, but they are not sincere in the Application of them. They do not dispute the Necessity of doing Violence to our Inclinations in order to obtain Heaven, but they find out specious Reasons to excuse themselves from that Violence in certain Occasions which require much Pains: They own themselves bound to subdue their Passions, and they fight with them, and frequently gain a kind of Victory over them, but they do not meddle with their reigning Passions; and this is the Cause that all their other Victories signifie nothing, for they should have begun with this. We must set a continual Watch upon our selves, and upon every Motion of our Hearts, that we may suppress all our Carnal Desires, the many almost imperceptible, but continual, selfish Designs, which make us seek only, tho' secretly, to advance our Interests, and a Thousand other Insinuations of Self-love, which surprize the most Virtuous, and mingling themselves with their best Actions, take away all their Merit, or at least diminish their Perfection.

*Of the false Complaisance which we
have for others.*

True Piety is never incommoded, it is full of Charity for all the World; a solidly virtuous Man is affable and obliging, never

troublesome or uneasie, but always in good Humour, still ready to do Service to others, and severe only to himself; for the Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of Peace and Sweetness. This Principle, Self-Love, which is ingenious in making Advantage of every thing, employs to deceive many who make Profession of Piety, by perswading them to draw Consequences from it very different from the true Spirit of Christ. Under this Pretence it would perswade us to please all the World, not to displease any Man; no, not those who do not relish our Saviour's Maxims; but how can we please him if we pretend not to displease them? From hence proceeds that unhappy, that unworthy Complaisance which makes us so often ashamed to take Christ's Part, and to declare our selves boldly his Disciples, because we would be complaisant, and disoblige no Body, But where do we find that a punctual Observance of our Rule, that Modesty, Recollection, and Purity, and the doing our Duty, is disobliging? If the imperfect are disoblig'd by these Things, we cannot avoid displeasing them, unless we are willing to betray our Consciences, and displease God.

Of Exactness.

We are not afraid of being thought weak or scrupulous, for being very earnest in pursuing

suing our Interests, exceeding careful in our Worldly Affairs, always upon the Watch to make use of every thing, to let slip no Occasion of making our Fortunes; on the contrary, it is the Way to be esteemed Men of Sense, Able, Wise and Prudent: But if we apply our selves seriously to the Business of Salvation, if we carefully lay hold on every little Opportunity of pleasing God, and of growing in Virtue; if we be exact in discharging all the Duties of our Station, and faithful in the smallest Matters, the World calls us weak and Scrupulous, it laughs at our Care, and blames our Conduct: They who are most desirous to please God are often less able to support this than any other Difficulty in the Practice of Virtue; they are better Proof against any other Persecution. My God, if the earnest Desire to please thee were condemn'd by the Infidels, 'tis no more than we might expect; but to meet with this Difficulty among Christians, among Men who profess to be thy Servants, this is what one can hardly imagine.

Of the Artifices of Self-love.

My God, how much Pains would a little Sincerity and Truth spare those who serve thee? We do not seek God with Simplicity enough, we are not entirely willing to please him, and we always seek our selves; nay, too often we seek only ourselves, even
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when we pretend to seek him. My God, where is the Danger of giving our selves wholly and entirely to thee that we take so much Time to resolve? 'Tis Self love that spoils all, and it is too true that the greatest Part of Mankind is govern'd only by it. All the Difference between spiritual Men, and those that are not so, is, that Self-love is bare-fac'd in the latter, and less visible, and more distinguish'd, in the former; and if we would take the Pains to reflect on the true Motive of the greatest Part of those Actions which seem least imperfect, we should find an Hundred Windings and Turnings of Self-love, which renders them all unfruitful.

Of the tender Love of God to those who serve him.

All the Sanctity and Perfection of a Christian Life consists, according to *S. Basil*, in looking upon God as the Cause of all Things, and in conforming our selves entirely to his Holy Will. If we were thoroughly convinc'd of this important Truth what a real Sweetness should we find in a Spiritual Life? And what perfect Tranquility should we enjoy, being assured that all that happens in the World (except Sin) proceeds from a particular Providence of God, who loves us tenderly? All the World ought to have this Confidence in God, but much more Religious Men, whom he hath adopted in a peculiar manner, and whom he hath

inspir'd with the Sentiments which dutiful Children should have for their Father. *My Father and my Mother have forsaken me, but the Lord hath receiv'd me,* saith the Psalmist, *Psal. 26. 10.* 'Tis an advantageous Exchange to chuse so good a Father in the room of him we have left : So that now we have a Right to say with Confidence, *The Lord taketh Care of me, therefore I shall not want,* *Psal. 22. 1.* *I am poor and needy, but the Lord provideth for me.* *Psal. 69. 6.* Who can reflect that God himself provides for him, that his Eternal Providence watches over him with the same Goodness and Care, as if he had no other Creatures to preserve in the whole World, who can think of this without feeling himself transported with Joy and Love to God? We shall find Reason enough to love him, and to abandon our selves entirely to him, if we do but reflect on the Obligations we have to his Fatherly Providence, and on the tender Love he bears us.

You believe that Sickness is the Effect of Chance : You thought that Humiliation, that Mortification, proceeded from the Passions of Men : They may indeed act out of Passion, but do you know that God makes these very Passions serve to bring about his Designs for your Advantage? Men perhaps seek to satisfy their Revenge by using you ill, but God permits it only for your good.

When *Joseph's* Brethren sold him into *Egypt*, they follow'd the Dictates of their
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Vengeance, and design'd his Ruin, but God made their barbarous Action a Means of Joseph's Glory? Since we have such powerful Motives to excite us to put all our Trust in God, why do we rely no more upon him? It is because we are not hearty towards him, we give him what he requires only by halves, imperfectly and unwilling; we continually refuse him some Part of what he demands, and this is the true Reason that our Requests are accompanied with so many Fears, and so little Faith.

How far we are to imitate Virtuous Men.

Good Examples are a great Help to us; we may easily be Saints if we converse with Saints; the Exercise of Virtue is much less difficult in the Company of those who truly practice it: But we must have a Care of taking any Man for our Pattern, tho' he seem never so Virtuous; we must imitate his Virtue, but we must still remember that he who is eminently Virtuous now may be perverted, and that the most perfect is he that has fewest Faults. When we propose to our selves to imitate any Man, we are in danger of imitating his very Imperfections: Our Opinion of his Virtue makes us copy every thing he does; we follow blindly all his Examples, and very often we imitate his Faults more than his Virtues.

Of Insensibility proceeding from Carelessness.

How can a Religious Man who lives carelessly, or a Priest who is indevout, and who dishonours his Sacred Character by his Manners, think without trembling on the Account they must give to God of all the Graces they have abus'd, of all the Good which they should have done, and of which they have render'd themselves incapable, and of all the Means of Sanctification of which they would make no use? These unhappy Men are like those who after having serv'd God fervently for some time, grow careless and weary of his Service: God usually punishes their Infidelity in this Life, and sometimes without Delay by an Insensibility, which often degenerates into Hardness of Heart; we have a terrible Example of this Insensibility in Judas, who had without doubt receiv'd singular Favours from Jesus Christ; no sooner was he grown careless, and had perverted himself, but he fell into a strange Insensibility, which became incurable; he could hear his Saviour say the most touching Things in the World without being at all affected; when the blessed Jesus press'd his Conversion in the tenderest and most loving, as well as most forcible manner; when the Son of God discover'd the wicked Intentions of that

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Traitor, without naming him, all the rest of the Apostles trembled for themselves, *Judas* only to whom he spake is unconcern'd: When a Soul is insensible, it soon grows impudent; *Judas* has the Face to ask if his Master means him: Christ conceals it no longer, but this Answer which should have fill'd him with Confusion makes no Impression on his hardned Heart; he hears coldly that terrible Threatning from his Saviour's Mouth, *Wo to that Man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed*, and remains insensible; Jesus condescends to wash his Feet, to give himself to him in the Communion, to exhort and threaten him, yet nothing moves him, nothing can stop him, he goes out and puts his impious Design in Execution, and accomplishes his black and malicious Ingratitude by a treacherous Kiss. How should we tremble at the Thought of this Insensibility? It is the most dreadful of Judgments, and so much the more dreadful in that it is not perceiv'd by those who lye under it. The surest Mark that we are not in that State is a Fear lest we should be in it? Nothing is so difficult as to convert those who are not sensible of their Want of Conversion.

Of the Thoughts of Death.

The Thought of Death is a most powerful Argument to convince us of the Vanities of

of this Life: We shall easily be disgusted with the empty Pleasures of the World, its imaginary Honours, and its false Riches, for which we weary our selves, if we seriously reflect where they all end; in a Winding Sheet, in a Coffin, in a Grave, in Worms and Dust, there are the Ends of all Humane Pride and Greatness. Form as many vast Projects as you please, rely upon your Wisdom, Friends, and Riches, you must quit them all whether you will or no, and they will all abandon you; only thou, O God, dost never forsake those who serve thee; I will therefore love and serve thee, and none but thee.

Of our Condescension to the Imperfect.

It is surprizing that Men have so little Consideration for fervent Christians, while they have all the Condescension in the World for the Careless and imperfect. But we do not see the special Hand of Providence, who herein favours those whom he loves most: Is a Man truly vertuous? We make no Scruple of exercising his Patience, his Desires are frequently cross'd, and he is often forc'd to do what he does not like; yet at the same time we refuse nothing to the Imperfect, whether it be that we use them like sick Men that are past Recovery, whom we let have what they please; or that God by a terrible Judgment lets them alone in
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this Life, and leaves them to their own Imaginations. However hard this Distinction seems, it is much for the Advantage of those who serve God faithfully, and renders them much more esteem'd by all who judge wisely, and who are animated by the Spirit of *Jesus Christ*.

Of Natural Inclinations to Vertue.

Men of soft and peaceable Tempers who seem born with a natural Propensity to Vertue, are in great Danger of being but indifferently vertuous, and of making no Progress in the Way of Perfection if they do not keep a strict Watch over all the Motions of their Hearts; else their natural Tranquility will degenerate into an Indolence which is very agreeable to Self-Love, so that they will take no Pains to acquire great Vertues, and will content themselves with an obscure Life, and with a seeming Moderation, not founded upon Humility, but the pure Effect of Self Love, which is unwilling to take Pains, and chuses a moderate Vertue for fear of meeting with Oppositions and Sufferings in the Pursuit of a more sublime. But alas! They who satisfy themselves with an ordinary Vertue will in all Probability live and die destitute of all true Vertue.

Of true Zeal.

It is a dangerous Fault to be uneasy when others do as many or more good Works than we: Would to God that all Preachers were eminent and successful; would to God that every Director of Souls had the Gift of Wisdom and discerning of Spirits, the Zeal and solid Piety which are so necessary for all Directors; so God be glorify'd what matter it whether I or another be the Instrument? When the good Success of others in the Exercise of their Ministry is a real Satisfaction to us, it is a sure Sign that we seek only his Glory.

Of Sincerity in the Service of God.

Many desire to be perfect, and from time to time endeavour after it, yet how few attain it? That which hinders the greatest Part from advancing in the Way of Vertue is a Want of Sincerity in God's Service; some little Affections which they do not and will not renounce; 'tis Self Love disguis'd under these specious Names of Moderation, good Sense, Prudence, and Civility. In fine, it is a certain secret Pride which corrupts the greatest Part of their best Actions. God will be serv'd with a Dove-like Simplicity, with an Uprightness of Soul, that cannot stoop to those little Arts of Self-love which

which are so prevalent every where; we seek an easy Directour, we torment our Brains to forge something like Reasons to excuse our selves from some Duties which we know in our Consciences God requires of us; but which we find unpleasant, and are unwilling to perform; do we think to deceive God by these Artifices? The Number of those who seek God in Spirit is very small, who serve him with that true Simplicity which is necessary to Perfection; how many, instead of endeavouring to please God, study to perswade themselves that they may please their own Appetites in every thing, without displeasing him? If they make him any little Sacrifice, they presently find out some Way to make themselves amends. How come so many Professours of Piety to be so very sensible in the imaginary Points of Honour? The Tone of a Voice, a disobliging Word disturbs them; let them make as much use as they please of the Words *Modest* and *Humble*, true Humility is inseparable from Patience and Sweetness. Many think that they are truly humble, because they have a mean Opinion of themselves but they deceive themselves if they are not willing that others should have the same Thoughts of them. It is not sufficient to know that we have no true Vertue or Merit, we must be willing to have others believe it too.

Of Submission of our Wills.

It is generally said, and perhaps not without Appearance of Reason, that devout Men are fond of their own Opinions ; but it is an Error to think that Men who will always follow their own Wills, and are obstinately conceited of their own Sentiments, can be truly devout. This Submission of our Wills is that renouncing of our selves which Jesus Christ requires so positively, and commands so often, in the Gospel, and without which we cannot be his Disciples. And indeed we can never be truly Virtuous without this Submission both of our Understanding and Will.

Of the Love of Christ.

If any thing (says a great Servant of God) could shake my Faith in the Mystery of the Eucharist, it would not be a Doubt of that infinite Power which God exerts there: I should sooner stagger at the exceeding Love of Jesus in giving himself there to us ; for I am not able to comprehend how Men can believe that he is present on our Altars, and that they receive him in this adorable Sacrament, and yet be indifferent and cold to him, be forgetful of, and disgusted with him.

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Who would not expect that such a wonderful Prodigy of Love should excite at least a Desire, an Earnestness, and exceeding Tenderness, in the Hearts of all Men? But alas! It is just contrary, we act as if we should have lov'd him more if he had lov'd us less; I tremble, O my God, at the Thought of the Indignities and Outrages which the Impiety of bad Christians, and the Fury of Hereticks, have offer'd to thee in this August Sacrament; how sacrilegiously have they profan'd thy Altars and thy Churches? How impiously and scornfully have they often treated the Body of Christ? Can any Christian call to Mind these horrible Impieties without being earnestly desirous to repair by all possible Means those barbarous Outrages? And how can a Christian live and not have that Desire:

Have I often thought on this? Do I think often on it? I who appear so seldom at the Foot of the Altar, and who am so unwilling to spare a little time to adore my Saviour, especially at those Hours when the Churches are least frequented.

My God, I will think seriously on it for the future, because I will now begin to love thee truly; and certainly it is high time for me to begin: I have made several Resolutions to love thee, and have broke them all, but I am confident this will be effectual: Yes, my Divine Saviour, I am fully resolv'd to love thee, and to love thee without any

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Reserve : Thou hast loved me, and would'st have me love thee, and therefore I am sure that thou wilt not refuse me thy Grace to enable me to love thee; full of this Hope and Confidence I am bold to say with thy Holy Apostle, *Who shall separate me from the Love of Christ? I am certain that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, neither the Sight of Things present, nor the Prospect of Things to come, nor Greatness, nor Adversity. nor any Creature, shall ever be able to separate me from, or deprive me of the Love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

F I N I S.



